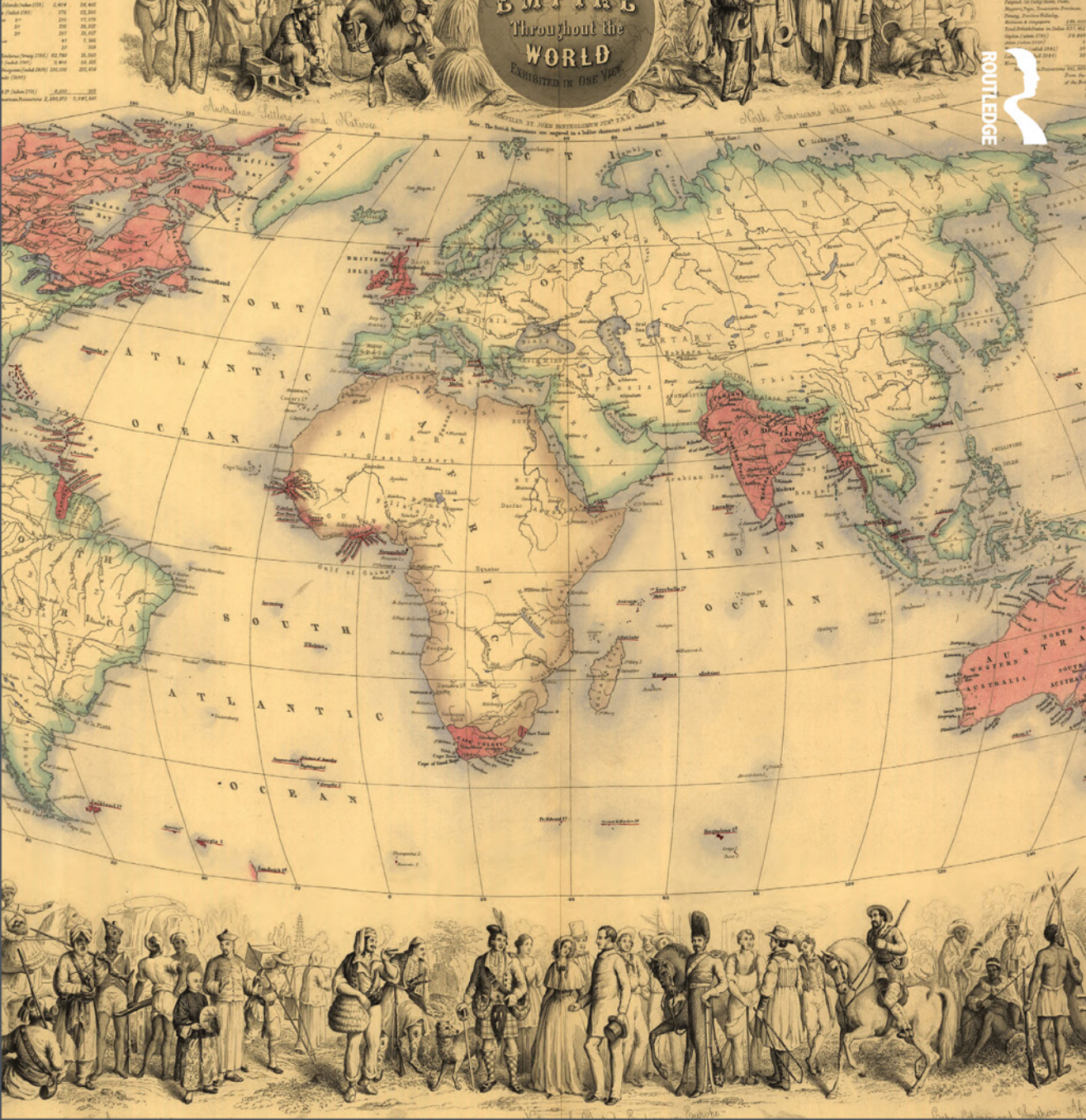




THE VICTORIAN WORLD

Edited by MARTIN HEWITT

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THE VICTORIAN WORLD

With an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses political history, the history of ideas, cultural history and art history, *The Victorian World* offers a sweeping survey of the world in the nineteenth century.

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Lavishly illustrated, vivid and accessible, this volume is invaluable reading for all students and scholars of the nineteenth century.

Martin Hewitt is Professor of History and Head of History, Politics and Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He was the founding editor of the *Journal of Victorian Culture*, and secretary of the British Association for Victorian Studies from 2000 to 2010. He has written extensively on the culture of the nineteenth-century city and on Victorian studies as a field. His publications include *An Age of Equipoise? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (2000), *The Diaries of Samuel Bamford, 1858–61* (2000) and *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester 1832–67* (1996).

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PREFACE

The notion of the ‘Victorian world’ as addressed by this volume is perhaps more ambivalent than most of the ‘worlds’ examined in the Routledge ‘Worlds’ series. The essays offered here, individually and severally, seek to work within this ambivalence, to respond on the one hand to an increasing sensitivity both to the imperial dimension of domestic culture of Britain and Ireland visible in the scholarship of the last decade, a new determination to see the imperial dynamics of the experience of Victorian Britain, and on the other to the new attentiveness to the dynamics and effects of globalisation.

The essays also acknowledge that the idea of ‘Victorian’ is itself a concept freighted with contested meanings and usages. For half a century ‘Victorian studies’ has been a recognisable field of interdisciplinary scholarship, equipped with the full panoply of academic endeavour, journals, associations, centres, bibliographies and chairs. And yet scholars have persisted in treating the designation with embarrassment, if not disdain, disputing the utility and validity of the chronological boundaries so signified, and contesting the coherence and consistency of the characteristics ascribed. The contributors to *The Victorian World* have not, in taking on their assignments, committed themselves to any particular stance in relation to these debates, other than a willingness to explore aspects of a ‘Victorian’ experience, the usefulness of designations of Victorian or Victorianism, and the productiveness of multidisciplinary approaches to these questions.

The volume has been structured around a series of themes and then specific topics designed to offer a broad multidisciplinary approach to its subject. Authors were given broad latitude in the particular approach to the topic they took on. The first section, which looks at Britain and the world order, and the last section, which attempts to consider the extent to which ‘Victorian’ and ‘Victorianism’ are useful concepts for understanding the cultures of British colonies of various sorts, the ‘informal empire’ and also the United States, by necessity adopt international perspectives. The essays in the remaining sections, on economy and society, politics, knowledge and belief, and culture, offer discussions more particularly centred on the experiences of Britain, although all the authors have been encouraged to explore the global dimensions and connections of their discussions.

It is hoped that cumulatively, the essays transcend the inevitable limits of their individual parts, together offering fresh insight into the character, conventions and contradictions of Victorian Britain and its wider world.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Victorian milestones



Martin Hewitt

On 22 January 1901 Queen Victoria died. The nation mourned the end of a period in the history of Britain and the world. ‘The queen is dead . . . and the great Victorian age is at an end . . . It will mean great changes in the world’ wrote one contemporary diarist (Wilfred Scawen Blunt, quoted in Smith 1964: v); ‘it was as if an essential wheel from the machine of the Empire, and indeed of the world, had slipped from its spindle’ commented E. F. Benson (1930: 336). In sombre tones, editorials in newspapers around the world lamented the Queen’s passing. Publishers rushed to issue nostalgic biographies and surveys of the reign. At a meeting at 10 Downing Street in May the Victoria League was founded to preserve the ideals the Queen was taken to stand for by promoting the idea of empire. A flurry of activity saw statues of Victoria take a prominent place in the public realm of towns and cities across the empire. Not all responses were uncritical (George Bernard Shaw denounced the Queen’s ten-day lying-in state as ‘insanitary’, recommending that she be quickly cremated or given a shallow burial in a perishable coffin [Holroyd 1989: 58]), but throughout the first half of the twentieth century autobiographers and novelists constructed the Queen’s death and state funeral as a moment of crisis and caesura in the narrative of British history. In the *Forsyte Saga* John Galsworthy conjured the response of the watching crowds: ‘a murmuring groan from all the long line of those who watched. . . so unconscious, so primitive, deep and wild . . . Tribute of an age to its own death. . . The Queen was dead, and the air of the greatest city upon earth grey with unshed tears.’ Even his worldly hero Soames saw the event as ‘supremely symbolical, this summing-up of a long rich period’ (Galsworthy 1922: 512, 518).

Although C. F. G. Masterman, in the preface of his *The Heart of Empire*, noted that even before the Queen’s death, ‘the forces characteristic of that period had become expended, and that new problems were arising with a new age’ (1901: v), the sense of sudden release was palpable. H. G. Wells compared the Queen to ‘a giant paperweight that for half a century sat upon men’s minds’ (Webb 1983: 3). ‘A restraining influence had been removed, which was none the less oppressive because it was largely an affair of sentimental imagination’, one later recollection more temperately suggested (Kellett 1936: 90–91). Such verdicts followed, if they

also subverted, a path already well established, not least in the enthusiastic and inevitably uncritical paeans that marked the celebrations of Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 1887 and 1897. For all her periods of public disengagement, her narrow range of experience, her prejudices and political partisanship, Victorian culture celebrated to itself a Queen who, in the popular Tennysonian concept, 'wrought her people lasting good' (Ellis 1932: 740). It was no accident that Lytton Strachey's Bloomsbury counterblast against the Victorians singled out the Queen as an object for his corrosive invective.

Three tropes emerge powerfully from the responses to the Queen's death: a belief that the reign of Queen Victoria constituted a distinct historical period, a recognition that the Queen was herself an active force in this distinctiveness, and the extent to which this was a global and not merely national, or even imperial, agency. Over the course of the twentieth century all three judgements have been treated in many quarters with scepticism, if not disdain. Historians and literary scholars tend to be suspicious of any periodisation, a position strengthened in recent years by the turn away from master narratives and the search for plurality and complexity. But there has been an especially powerful prejudice against the Victorian as period, perhaps in part because of this sense of monarchical agency. John Lucas, for example, has suggested that 'There is a strong case for arguing that, except in the most rigorously controlled of contexts, "Victorian" and "Victorianism" are terms we could well do without. They are all too frequently employed in ways that are chronologically indefensible, historically dubious, intellectually confusing, and ideologically unacceptable' (Lucas 2000: 29). Griselda Pollock has warned of the 'gendered disability' that the 'female naming' of 'Victorian' imposes, making it 'susceptible to the easy narrative, the anecdotal, the immediate, the decorative, the sentimental, the brightly-coloured and showy, the eclectic' (Pollock 1993–94: 599). It is a feature of Victorian studies that scholars who identify to a greater or less extent with the field often do so without enthusiasm for the periodisation it implies.

Paradoxically, while unease with Victorian periodisation has flourished, so has recognition of the significance of Victoria in her imperial role. Recent scholarship has affirmed that claims for the importance of Victoria were not simply the product of an unsavoury cultural dependence. John Plunkett has explored the extent to which 'Victoria inhabited her subjects' lives to an extraordinary degree' (Plunkett 2003: 2). This was not merely a question of the pervasive material presence of Victorian iconography: Staffordshire pottery figurines, Victoria parks, halls, baths, hotels, hospitals, universities, stations, even insurance companies, V. R. insignia on postboxes, mayoral chains of office. It was a reflection to the extent to which, notwithstanding her withdrawal after the death of Albert, Victoria was assiduous in her public role, an assiduousness that brought engagement with insight and firmness with important issues of foreign policy, and a general oversight over all elements of government. Opinionated, forthright, stubborn, at times she was writing to Disraeli three or four times a day (Hardie 1935). Significantly, republicanism obtained little purchase within nineteenth-century radicalism, which participated without any great unease in the ceremonial of the loyal subject. As David Cannadine has noted: 'the British Empire was a *royal* empire, presided over and unified by a sovereign of global amplitude and semi-divine fullness' (Cannadine 2001: 102). Victoria's name 'was literally *everywhere*', in the names of lakes and rivers, towns

and cities. Her statue, ‘often in canopied magnificence’ gazed down from Vancouver to Valetta, from Cairo to Canberra. The *Daily Graphic* summed up the 1897 Diamond Jubilee celebrations as ‘the survey of the Sixty Years Reign and of the microcosm of Empire with which we have filled our streets’ (Judd 1996: 132).

The Jubilee celebrations of 1887 and 1897 played a significant role in cementing understandings of the association of Queen with a distinct historical period. In both years the market was flooded with general surveys of the reign, such as T. H. Ward’s *The Reign of Victoria: Fifty Years of Progress* (1887) and T. H. S. Escott’s *Social Transformations of the Victorian Age* (1897). As the titles of many of these texts indicate, despite the accusation of later scholars that, in the words of Lucas, “‘Victorian’ in particular is used to imply a cultural and political homogeneity which, the evidence suggests, never existed” (Lucas 2000: 29), the contemporary conviction that the Queen’s reign marked a distinct period in British history implied no stability except the consistency of overwhelmingly beneficial transformation. For the Victorians their age was ‘an age of revolution’ (for example Dowden 1888: 159). The celebrations of the period that poured from the press in 1887 and 1897 were united in their sense of the distance travelled since the 1830s. In his response to Tennyson’s gloomy “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After”, for example, Gladstone offered a vigorous defence of the Victorian record. The evils that Tennyson bemoaned might exist, but their prevalence had been greatly reduced: education had been provided, wages increased, philanthropic activity was providing model dwellings, the demoralising abuses of the Poor Law had been swept away, class legislation like the Game Laws repealed, the iniquities of barriers to trade banished, England had led the world in the establishment of cheap communications, religious disabilities removed, the administration reformed, the country’s trade increased fivefold, the manners of the people and their popular pastimes improved (Gladstone 1887). It is this sort of almost forced optimism that Gissing’s Mr Barmby lampooned in *In the Year of Jubilee*: ‘to celebrate the completion of fifty years of Progress. . . . Only think what has been done in this half century; only think of it! Compare England now, compare the world with what it was in 1837. It takes away one’s breath!’ (Gissing 1887: 35).

Historians have also questioned the efficacy of the ‘Victorian’ as period by challenging its internal coherence and terminal dates. In the historiography of the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant categories were ‘early’ and ‘late Victorian’, with the break falling conveniently just about halfway through the reign. R. C. K. Ensor, in his volume of the *Oxford History of England* proceeded confidently from the predicate that ‘round about 1870 occurs a watershed in English life’ (Ensor 1936: 136). G. M. Young, the most influential twentieth-century interpreter of the Victorians, adopted this frame in his *Early Victorian England*. Significantly, however, Young’s own introductory essay to this volume furnished the bulk of the material for his *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (1936), which treated the post-1870 period as something of an addendum. In the second half of the century this chronological narrowing became a common feature of interpretations of the Victorian. Walter Houghton’s immensely influential *Victorian Frame of Mind* covered only 1830–70. Thereafter it became commonplace, especially of literary and cultural studies, to conceive of some core nineteenth-century period (most commonly the 50 years from 1830 to 1880) as Victorian, consigning

the later years to a (usually ill-defined) transitional or ‘post-Victorian’ period; the approach most recently taken by Philip Davis’ volume on *The Victorians* in the *Oxford English Literary History*. During the 1950s the binary divide was generally superseded by the adoption of a three-way division of early, middle and late, which followed a number of works, in particular W. L. Burn’s *An Age of Equipoise*, which in effect divided the pre-1870 period into ‘early’ and ‘mid-’ Victorian periods, although on occasions the mid-Victorian was pushed into the 1870s. Indeed in recent years the 1870s and early 1880s have become contested terrain, often loosely assimilated into the mid Victorian.

This introductory chapter attempts to provide a sense of the internal structure of the Victorian period, to evaluate the appropriateness of its sub-periodisations; to consider its transitional moments and specific milestones. How far did the beginning and end of Victoria’s reign mark significant watersheds in the history of Britain and her global presence? What was the nature of the transformations effected? To what extent did the intervening period share common characteristics? What were the key moments of change within the period, and what sort of internal periodisation do they create? G. M. Young once recommended the study of a single year as a way to understanding crucial phases of crisis and reorientation, and there are a number of Victorian examples, studies of 1837, 1848, 1850, 1859, 1867, 1884 and 1900. In the discussion that follows most of these years will figure prominently, but usually as part of more extended periods of change. As Carl Dawson has acknowledged, historical processes ‘sprawl in time’ and calendar years are rarely satisfactory (Dawson 1979: xi). The discussion that follows suggests that all these years, with the partial exception of 1859, can be placed within watersheds that help structure the Victorian period, not into the traditional binary or tripartite divisions, but into four distinct phases.

ENTERING THE VICTORIAN AGE

The year 1837 is not a very promising candidate as the threshold of a new era. Richard Stein’s study *Victoria’s Year. English Literature and Culture, 1837–1838* demonstrates the presence of many straws in the wind of change, but no coherent or substantial sense of the year as a critical moment. Like many of the hinge years of the period, 1837 was a year of economic bust. Perhaps in part for this reason, Victoria’s accession less than a month after her eighteenth birthday was celebrated in street ballad and periodical squib alike as offering the promise of a new start, a break with Hanover, a ‘spring-like reign’ as Laetitia Landon mused (quoted in Plunkett 2003: 18). The new reign necessitated a general election, which brought one Benjamin Disraeli to the Commons, as well as confirming the growing importance of middle-class radicalism and tightening the screw of party. The Great Western, the biggest ship in the world, was launched on 19 July 1837 (although it did not make its first successful crossing of the Atlantic until April 1838). Captain Alexander Burnes arrived in Kabul to attempt to enter into commercial relations with the ruler, beginning the ‘great game’ in Central Asia. There were rebellions in Canada, while at home a parliamentary enquiry into relations with aboriginal peoples in British settlements was noting that ‘the situation of Great Britain brings her beyond any other power into communication with the uncivilised nations of

the earth' (quoted Darwin 2009: 27). John Pringle Nichol's *Views of the Architecture of the Heavens* offered an important early statement of the evolutionary history of the world and the galaxy. Legal reforms abolished the pillory as a punishment, and severely curtailed the scope of the death penalty. A meeting at the British Coffee House, sponsored by the London Working Men's Association, effectively launched the campaign for the People's Charter. But portentous as all this might have been, it cannot be said to constitute a move from one era to another.

Nevertheless, in hindsight it is possible to see 1837 as coming towards the end of a number of years of far-reaching reformation, which taken together do – even if largely as a matter of happenstance – constitute a fundamental historical transformation. These changes were innumerable and wide-ranging (Schlicke 2005). Some can be traced to a particular event or instance, though most involved processes of social and cultural modification that unfolded over time. The pace of change was not uniform, although in many cases, as contemporaries remarked, it was remarkably rapid. Sir James Mackintosh, the Whig law reformer, commented that in comparing the decades before 1830 to those immediately after it was as if he had 'lived in two different countries and conversed with people who spoke different languages' (quoted in Lester 1995: 40).

The year 1832 is a much better candidate for the opening of the period that was to be named Victorian. Reform agitation and the Swing Riots generated a profound sense of crisis. Admittedly, when it finally emerged, the 1832 Reform Act (and its Scottish equivalent) was a conservative measure, which increased the electorate to only about 20 per cent of the population, and left the new industrial areas very much underrepresented, and the landed elite still dominant. This said, the transformation was still profound, sweeping away key elements of the ancient constitution, and setting a pattern that survived until the final years of Victoria's reign. Several important recent studies have re-established the extent to which the various reform measures of these years 'unleashed a wave of political modernisation' and 'could scarcely have caused a more drastic alteration in England's political fabric' (Phillips and Wetherell 1995: 412, 416). The significance of the developments of the 1830s lies less in the political arithmetic of enfranchisement or even the algebra of party development, than in the emotional and intellectual responses they elicited. Suddenly, the years of Lord Liverpool seemed the remote politics of the past. Many constituencies in Scotland and Wales were transformed from tiny closely managed fiefdoms to larger electorates with a genuine political voice. There was a fundamental broadening of the political nation, especially in the way that the redistribution of seats helped to place the practices and rituals of participative politics at the centre of the public culture of the expanding towns and cities. Hanoverian 'virtual representation' was replaced by a franchise based on universal judgements of individual capacity. The 1832 settlement established that the right adjustment of the franchise was a function of personal fitness rather than systemic exigencies, and ensured that for the next 80 years debates over the nature and claims of citizenship would remain at the heart of politics. At the same time, a new 'two-party polarity was created with remarkable suddenness' (Clark 1985: 410). The terms 'Conservative' and 'Liberal' came into common usage for the first time in the decade after 1827, and voting patterns on party lines hardened dramatically in

parliament and in the constituencies (Rohan McWilliam's essay in this volume offers an alternative discussion of the place of party in Victorian politics, but not one that is in fundamental dispute with the argument here).

This redistribution of political power was part of a much wider transformation of cultural geographies occurring in the 1830s, symbolised above all by 'culture-shaking improvement in communication' (Robson 1976: 80). The decade brought not just the railways and steamships but paper-making machinery and the rotary steam press, the reformed postal service, wood-cut illustrations and photography, and cable telegraphy. These technologies, and the meanings ascribed to them by contemporaries amazed and sometimes bewildered at the pace and scale of change, helped reorder the landscape, transform personal relationships and reconfigure Britain's global presence. At the heart of this transformation were the railways. Conventionally the railway age commenced with the opening of the Liverpool to Manchester railway in 1830, although it was not the first railway, or even the first to carry passengers. In 1835 the *Quarterly Review* was still describing as 'palpably ridiculous ... the prospect held out of locomotives travelling twice as fast as stagecoaches' (quoted in Sanders 1999: 63). Yet within a few short years stagecoaches were already being treated as a symbol of the past. From 1839 to 1841 the nucleus of a national network was established. Steam propulsion on land encouraged steam propulsion on water. Like railways, steamships first began to appear several decades before the accession of Victoria; but here too the 1830s were years of rapid development, stimulated by government mail contracts and by the railways. Steam metaphors became inescapable, and in two memorable images, *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839), an elegy on the fate of one of Nelson's most famous ships made obsolete by the new steam frigates, and *Rail, Steam, Speed* (1844), a meditation on the disruptive force of the railway locomotive and its tracks in the English countryside, J. M. W. Turner marked Britain's passage into a new age of steam. Driven by the greater access railways offered publishers to national markets, and the partial removal of restrictions of the stamp duties, the 1830s also saw the occasionally belated application of a number of technological developments in printing and publishing: the production of paper from rags, new methods of type-setting such as stereotyping, and the exploitation of the first steam printing presses. The result was what one literary historian has described as 'the great literary watershed of the years 1830–36' (James 1974: 83). The popular monthlies and weeklies so characteristic of Victorian periodical publishing flooded onto the market in the years after 1832 and the launch of Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*.

At the same time Britain's international position was being transformed. The accession of Victoria cut the dynastic link that had sustained Britain's place as a continental power and helped to consolidate a process of disengagement and repositioning in imperial terms already well underway. Trading links were refocused from Europe to Latin America and Asia. Britain's global muscles were flexed. The years from around 1836 to 1844 saw a surge in missionary activity. Texts such as Henry Merivale's *Introduction to a course of lectures on Colonisation and Colonies* (1839), indicated a new belief in empire's economic and strategic benefits. Although superficially it would seem that empire remained a distant presence in British culture, the work of Catherine Hall and others has demonstrated that the liberal reforms

of the 1830s were themselves powerfully inflected by imperial concerns (Burton 2006: 213–15). In 1841 in response to the exclusion of British manufacturers from much of Europe, Lord Palmerston noted that ‘we must unremittingly endeavour to find in other parts of the world new vents for the produce of our industry’ (Williams and Ramsden 1990: 242). The existing empire was reconstituted: the dilution of East India Company control in 1833 was part of a rapid process of Westernisation in India, which took place from the later 1820s to the mid 1830s; at the Cape, the ‘Great Trek’ of 1837 consolidated British control of the coastal territories; Australia was transformed from a penal colony into a settlement colony; and in the wake of the 1838 Durham Report into the Canadian rebellions of 1837, responsible government was extended to the European inhabitants of the settler colonies. At the same time, through consolidation and acquisition the strategic scaffolding of a global empire was assembled. In 1832 Singapore was appointed the capital of the Straits Settlements, and the next decade or so saw the establishment of a chain of ports, coaling stations and naval bases tying the empire together: the Falkland Islands (1833), Aden (1839), Hong Kong (1842), Labuan (1846) and Lagos (1851). As the new steamer routes that had opened in the 1830s enhanced the significance of the Middle East as the key strategic corridor to India, so Britain, in the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1838 and then the Straits Convention of 1841, committed itself to support the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian expansion, in the process establishing one of the cornerstones of Victorian diplomacy.

The 1830s were also a crucial period in the creation of, in Isobel Armstrong’s words, ‘an avidly scopic culture – a culture of *looking*’ (Armstrong 1996: 125). By the 1830s the railway was bringing new modes of seeing as well as travelling. The carriage window was one way in which the plate glass techniques originating at the Chance factory in Birmingham in the early 1830s created new opportunities for the gaze. Images proliferated. The market for engravings and prints (both wood cuts and copper plates) was transformed. The development of the steel engraving processes of the 1820s and chromolithography and electrotyping in the 1830s reduced prices and improved quality; the exclusivity of the print was destroyed and the density of prints in homes and publications increased rapidly. The two defining titles of Victorian graphic journalism, the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch*, were both established in 1841, consolidating a revolution in visual style that had seen Regency caricature disappear remarkably rapidly during the 1830s. ‘We know that the advent of an Illustrated Newspaper in the country *must* mark an epoch’ the *ILN* trumpeted on its launch (Stein 1987: 274). Recognition of the subjectivity of vision only intensified the search for objective knowledge based on observation and the accumulation of facts. The 1830s saw a new ‘scientific approach to nature’, a ‘shift from subject to object’ (Ball 1971: 73), and calls for the careful training of vision needed for ‘right seeing’.

The disruptive force of the railways seemed to be everywhere: the geologist Gideon Mantell grumbled that the railways ‘completely metamorphosed the English character’, bringing ‘Eternal hustle, movement with the greatest rapidity, constant change’ (quoted Radford 2003: 104). Although speed reduced duration and thus the expenditure of time in some contexts, the communications revolution did more to increase the significance of time. The operations of the railway quickly came to rely on the maintenance of a whole new technology of precise and elaborate

timetables. In education, penal policy, and the New Poor Law there was a new focus on the disciplining of time, on methods by which the student (or inmate) would be (as one essay as early as 1824 put it) ‘employed every minute of the time’ (quoted in Trodd 1994: 37). The past was suddenly all the rage. Carlyle’s essay ‘On History Again’ (1833) registers contemporary perceptions of the encompassing force of the past. ‘History with the beginnings of it stretching dimly into remote Time’ (quoted Sanders 1978: 1).

The publication of Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830–33) ushered in a period of greater scientific acceptance and popular recognition of ‘deep time’, that the earth’s age could not be encompassed by the 6,000 years of the Biblical chronology, but was many millions of years old. As palaeontology allowed the sequencing of the geological record, it also increasingly revealed strange prehistoric creatures and worlds. Not surprisingly, geology captured the public imagination in the 1830s to an unprecedented degree. From the early 1830s pictorial representations of the world of the dinosaurs began to circulate, and the deep past became vividly real in a way that had not been possible before. Geological discoveries contributed to a further critical shift, in which the 1830s were the pivotal decade, from a dominant conception of the social and natural world that was essentially static or cyclical to one that was mobile and developmental. So much so, that it is possible to see a broadly constructed ‘science of progress’ emerging in the 1830s, transcending apparently separate fields from political economy to astronomy. There is an important distinction to be made here between progressivism and ‘evolution’: but the 1830s saw the establishment of the foundations of the latter, and the very wide acceptance of the former. In astronomy, the nebular hypothesis, that stars, planets, moons had evolved from a gaseous ‘fire-mist’, was given wide currency in texts such as Nichols’ *Architecture of the Heavens* (1837). Lamarckian evolutionary ideas began to spread; they were never widely endorsed, but the concerted resistance mounted by conservative elites in the 1830s to such ideas speaks tellingly of the challenge being posed.

The feverishness of the resistance also reflected the anxiety of the Anglican elite in these years. The late 1820s and 1830s were ‘crisis years’ for the Church of England, years that transformed the relations of Church and state, and profoundly altered the nature of the Church itself. Frank Turner speaks of a ‘cultural apostasy’ of the later 1830s and 1840s, which overthrew the dominant cultural position of Anglicanism (Turner 1993). There were various signs of the erosion of the civil power of the church, including the rapid decline in the use of the death penalty after 1832, the sharp fall in the number of clerics being appointed to the magistrates bench, and in the numbers of cases being tried by clerical JPs. The Established Church Act (1836), and the Tithe Commutation Act (1836) ended key elements of the Church of England’s privileged position as the national religion. The parliamentary drive for reform opened up the threat of the church’s subordination to the state. The decade before 1837 brought a renewal of Dissenting activism after a half-century of relative quiescence. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts gave Dissent a novel sense of its unity and power, the 1832 Reform Act supplied influence, and the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act offered power (Watts 1995). Contemporaries recognised a new puritan aggressiveness. The growth of the temperance movement, and the wide-ranging recommendations of the 1834 Select Committee

on Drunkenness indicated a more ambitious attempt at the ‘reform of manners’. Sabbatarianism revived. Four attempts at legislation between 1833 and 1837 culminated in a narrow failure in 1837 (when the measure passed a second reading but lapsed on the death of the king).

The years before Victoria’s accession also saw significant shifts in attitudes to education. Suspicion of educating the poor ‘beyond their station’, still very powerful in the 1820s, were in rapid retreat by the mid 1830s. Enquiries and reports like the Select Committee on Art and Design (1835–36) indicated both a commitment to the diffusion of knowledge and a new willingness to see it as the responsibility of the state. Central government grants for education were introduced in 1833. Science emerges as a truly independent and central enterprise. The coining of the term ‘scientist’ by William Whewell in his *History of the Inductive Sciences* (1837) registers this shift, while the formation of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1831 signalled a desire for a less dilettante science, and the establishment of the Geological Survey (1835) began the institutionalisation of state support for science. Crazes for phrenology and mesmerism prompted unprecedented popular interest in science.

One of the ironies of this welter of change was that it emerged largely independently of economic progress. It is clear that the early nineteenth-century British economy did not experience a rapid and wholesale ‘industrial revolution’; social and economic change was gradual and uneven, characterised by the interpenetration and complementary exploitation of mechanization and handicrafts. In the face of theories of discontinuity and ‘take off’, gradualists have persuasively argued for a long period of slow evolution. Nevertheless, two propositions are relatively widely held: that there was a major transformation in economy and society during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which produced an ‘industrial society’ quite different to that which had existed a century or so previously; and that the end of this process can usefully be placed around 1830 (see for example Mokyr 1993). From this perspective, the 1830s were a decade of critical change, the moment at which economic development began to accelerate significantly (see Griffin’s essay in this volume). Periods of deep cyclical depression were compounded by structural unemployment caused by the mechanisation of textiles production. This social change, given institutional expression in organisations such as the National Union of the Working Classes, and the calculations underlying the adjustments of the franchise in 1832, established ‘class’ as a fundamental category of Victorian discourse, practice and prejudice.

THE EARLY VICTORIAN PERIOD

The years from the mid 1830s to the end of the 1840s offer an obvious coherence, bound together by the social and economic hardships of the ‘hungry Forties’, the emergence and then break up of Peel’s Conservative Party, the ‘Chartist moment’, and the constitution of the condition of England question. These were years of crisis, tension and readjustment, which saw the working out of the consequences of the revolutionary changes of the decade leading up to the accession of Victoria, and the resulting consolidation of various centrally characteristic elements of the Victorian condition.

The tone of the period was dominated by some of the consequences of the longstanding processes of industrialisation and urbanisation that had culminated in the 1830s. Britain strengthened its position as the world's leading manufacturing economy. The adoption of steam-driven processes in the cotton and woollen industries of the north brought increasing numbers under the discipline of the factories, and left many handworkers to suffer the privations of overwork and structural unemployment. In Ireland, an impoverished peasantry was left to starve as the potato crops of the mid-decade years succumbed to disease. Factory and the machine were not ubiquitous but they rapidly became a dominant image of the age, symbolic of a range of attendant changes, and a powerful motor for the development of new social identities (see Gray 1996). Economic hardships combined with working-class resentments at the denial of the franchise in 1832, subsequently compounded by the harsh *laissez-faireism* of the New Poor Law, encouraged the rapid growth of the campaign for the People's Charter. Ebbing and flowing between peaks of activity in 1839, 1842 and 1848, the Chartist movement, along with Owenism and campaigns for Poor Law reform and factory legislation, ensured a sense of social and political instability that only finally waned after the ignominious dismissal of Chartist pressure in 1848.

The country's ability to contain the challenge of social and political radicalism owed much to the way the political system gradually adjusted itself to the post-1832 power balances. Party identities were consolidated. Executive control over parliament was significantly strengthened. A consensus, partial and constantly contested, but nonetheless real, emerged around a number of political principles. Its basic tenets were cheap government, 'good government', '*Laissez-faire*', 'free trade' and 'sound money', underpinned by a political philosophy of individualism and rationalism (for an exploration of the significance of sound coinage, see Alborn in this volume). During the early Victorian period the political elites successfully affirmed the impartiality of the state: dissociating it from social disputes, emphasizing its commitment to public service, absolving it of virtually all responsibility for the economy (as in the case of the 1844 Bank Charter Act, which removed the state's direct responsibility for currency). The minimalist state was sustained by the system of minimised expenditure, low tax burdens and reducing reliance on indirect duties, established in its essentials by the Peel government of the 1840s and completed by Gladstone in the 1850s. Peel's 1841–46 government reduced and abolished hundreds of duties, and introduced an income tax in peace time in Britain for the first time. Within a few years the fiscal *ancien régime* had been abolished. The basis was established for a steady and accelerating increase in per capita government expenditure through the Victorian period, and an even more rapid increase in taxable revenue. As Zoë Laidlaw's chapter demonstrates, recognition that the Victorian state was not merely a national but also an imperial institution complicates this picture without challenging its essentials.

The gradual working through of the readjustments of the 1830s was especially visible in local government, where municipal reform was articulated and extended in the localities over the ensuing decade by a stream of new incorporations. Parish vestries were finally superseded in many places, the stasis that had developed out of tensions between various local authorities was overcome, and the Tory oligarchies that had assumed control in many of the long-incorporated boroughs

were dismantled. Although local government remained predominantly bourgeois, the admission of the Liberal-Dissenting middle class created new rivalries within urban elites and necessitated a reworking of the forms and composition of social leadership in the city. Despite a hard-fought rearguard action that succeeded in smoothing some of its sharper edges, these years also saw the steady spread of the New Poor Law, and with it the establishment of the principle of ‘less eligibility’, institutionalising a set of social assumptions that persisted through to the end of century, summed up by Samuel Smiles’s suggestion in 1860 that ‘misery is the offspring of individual improvidence and vice; and it is to be cured, not so much by conferring greater rights, as by implanting better habits’ (Supple 1978: 114) (see Alex Tyrrell’s essay in this volume). For the purposes of policy, poverty was accepted as a product of individual failing, not social circumstance.

Yet these circumstances were changing. Just over a third of Britain’s population was urban according to the 1801 census; by 1841 this had increased to very nearly a half, a watershed passed sometime in the 1840s. Victorian culture was dominated by its contradictory and ambivalent attempts to make sense of this urbanisation (see essays of Dennis and Taylor in this volume). Rapid building in the 1830s and 1840s created concentrated districts of poor back-to-back houses. The slow spread of building regulations meant that some cities continued to allow back-to-back houses to be built into the 1890s, but even where prohibition was earlier, the early Victorian housing stock often dominated. Workers lived in close proximity to places of work. Forests of chimneys, industrial and domestic, brought dense smoke pollution. Buildings were blackened, as was the rain. Plants were stunted. Rivers flowing through populous districts became open sewers. Sanitary problems that came to prominence during the inquiries of the early 1840s persisted, as did an environmentalist preoccupation with housing standards (cellars, back-to-backs; multiple occupancy – the whole paraphernalia of ‘slums’ identified along with the word in the 1820s and 1830s). The economic hardships of these years, culminating in the disastrous Irish famine of the 1840s, generated the first surges of nineteenth-century emigration, turning Britain into the ‘emigrant society’ (Darwin 2009: 58) that it was throughout the century (see Richards’ essay in this volume).

G. M. Young noted in his *Victorian England* that family was one of only two ‘vital articles’ in the ‘common Victorian faith’ (Young 1960: 150–51). In the early Victorian period domestic ideals shaped perceptions of the nature of society, and were institutionalised as a key part of the response to its problems. Works such as Sarah Stickney Ellis’s *Women of England* (1838) and Sarah Lewis’s *Women’s Mission* (1839) were merely the most significant of a welter of conduct manuals and advice books that popularised and enforced explicit visions of women’s mission as ‘domestic’ (Armstrong 1987). Although these manuals were aimed at middle-class readerships, the mobilisation in the 1830s and 1840s of similar ideals by Tory Radicals like Joseph Rayner Stephens infused working-class culture with similar conceptions. Domesticity became a dominant theme of Victorian drama. It was reflected in the flood that prompted the Royal Academy in 1852 to establish the new category of ‘domestic paintings’. For the American transcendentalist R. W. Emerson, domesticity had become ‘the taproot’ of Victorian empire (quoted in Behlmer 1998: 5). Sanitary reformers, social investigators and ‘condition of England’ novelists of the 1840s shared a diagnosis of social malaise rooted in what

they saw as the deformation of working-class home life (Poovey 1995) (see Pamela Gilbert's essay in this volume).

The Victorian age cannot be reduced to the 'railway age', but tracking the characteristics of early Victorian culture rarely involves straying far from the railway. The inescapability of the railway was confirmed in the 15 years after Victoria's accession. From its hesitant early beginnings the expansion of the railways gathered pace rapidly after 1837. The travel time from London to Scotland in 1836 was 43 hours; by 1848 this had been reduced to 17. The 'railway mania' of 1845–47 drove the extension of the system from 2,000 miles in 1844 to 7,500 miles in 1852, by which time the essentials of a fully national network and the dominant railway companies of the period were in place (Freeman 1999). The railways affected life for all, fostering economic specialisation and integration, drawing the fringes into the metropolitan economy, and encouraging internal migration. Rail excursions rapidly became popular. Previously sedate seaside resorts mushroomed. Steam trains and packets steadily improved the speed of postal communications. Having doubled between 1839 and 1840, the numbers of letters carried by the Royal Mail doubled again by 1849, and thereafter continued to double on a per capita basis every 20 years (Daunton 1985). Mail-based businesses expanded rapidly. The railway enabled the rapid growth of periodical publishing. 'Cheap Periodicals belong to the age of the Railway! . . . light postage, quick transit, cheap Bibles and cheap Periodicals for the Millions of England!', declaimed one Congregationalist minister (quoted in Cunningham 1975: 53). 'Popular' series, like Routledge's 'Railway Library' launched in 1848, selling reprinted fiction to the middle classes at 1s–2s, proliferated. By the later 1840s 'yellowbacks' (including G.W.M. Reynolds' *Loves of the Harem*) and 'penny dreadfuls' including *Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood* (1847) were squeezing out traditional chapbooks and creating a genuine mass book market (St Clair 2004). The international reading cultures that resulted are explored in Jonathan Rose's essay in this volume.

Just as technological developments underpinned the publishing revolution, so the development of electroplying in the 1830s made possible a new mass market for engraved reproductions, fostered by the rapid spread of local art unions and commercial printsellers. The early Victorian years saw the consolidation of a new visuality, exemplified by the novel relationships of text and image inscribed in the modes of illustrated fiction installed almost overnight, it seemed, by the success of *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and *Pickwick Papers*. The proliferation of visual shows in early Victorian popular science culture indicated the popular appetite for spectacle. By 1839–40 the London Colosseum was offering optical illusions of the 'World of Spirits', an achromatic solar microscope, and a Gregorian reflecting telescope. The 1840s saw the rapid consolidation of the illustrated novel, and the popularity of profusely illustrated popular historical, scientific and topographical books issued by publishers like Charles Knight or the Chambers brothers. The decade also saw the creation of new forms of graphic journalism evident in the establishment of a number of illustrated periodicals, which became characteristic of the whole period, most prominently the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch* and *The Builder* (1843). The formation of the Printsellers' Association in 1847 reflected the rapid expansion of the trade of print sellers and publishers, largely through sales of engravings of popular pictures by leading contemporary painters. In the provinces, an industrial

exhibition at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute in December 1837 instituted an exhibition movement that pointed the way to the 1851 Great Exhibition.

Governmental information-gathering bureaucracies expanded significantly. Annual crime returns (1836), the registration of births, marriages and deaths (1837), the first full/efficient census (1841), the Ordnance and Tithe surveys of the 1840s, the construction of urban police forces, the new statistical societies, all reflected a shift towards what Thomas Kuhn has described as an 'avalanche of numbers' appearing around 1840, penetrating Victorian culture from the physical sciences to philanthropic action (Kuhn 1979: 219–20). The enumerative imperialism identified by Bernard Cohn was one result (Cohn 1996). All this contributed to a strain of what J. S. Mill described as the 'vulgar' empiricism of Victorian Britain; a belief of 'practical men' that knowledge could be achieved by the accumulation of information, which was reflected in the suspicion of theory and inclination to expediency characteristic of Victorian political thought (Smith 1994), and the 'almost anti-intellectual pragmatism' of Victorian sanitary reformers (Wohl 1983: 72). Notoriously, condition-of-England novelists ransacked the 'bluebooks' for raw material, creating fiction that aspired to the condition of a parliamentary investigation. Like so much else characteristic of Victorian culture, realism had strong roots back into the eighteenth century, but it was elevated to a new level of systematic deployment from the mid 1840s onwards. Thereafter the broad appeal of realist approaches is demonstrated by the shift from caricature to Victorian naturalism discernible in the book illustration from the 1840s, and in the standards of verisimilitude that dominated Victorian painting. Despite the attacks of *fin de siècle* modernists, this was never a matter of the purely superficial: the formulations of Victorian realism were fired through with recognition of the way in which understandings of the world were mediated by unstable representations and by their acceptance of the importance of intuition or imagination.

Railways and telegraphs also intensified the 'sensation of time' (*Quarterly Review* 1842, quoted in Radford 2003: 96). Temporal anxieties reflected the extent to which time acquired a new cultural role dramatised by factory time and national 'railway time'. The first train companies were reluctant to run to fixed timetables of arrival, precisely because they worried that they would not be able to meet the discipline imposed; but carriage of the post from 1838 brought with it the obligation to timetabling and punctuality. The timetable required synchronisation across the network, which encouraged the establishment of 'national time'. Greenwich time was officially adopted in 1848, and although it was not until 1880 that an Act of Parliament was passed standardising time in UK, in practice it had happened much earlier. The more potentially unruly the clientele, the more minutely scheduled the day. Many of the institutional articulations of what has been described as the (early) Victorian 'revolution in government', not just the work-house, but the state schools, the prisons and reformatories, were predicated on the overt and explicit use of new forms of temporal discipline. Staff at Pentonville prison were subjected to a system of 'tell-tale' clocks that required officers to clock in around the prison. Time was commodified; industrial management evolved a new paraphernalia of regulations, supervision and 'time boards'. In the textile factories of the north (at least) clearer regulatory and definitional regimes of time were essentially consolidated in the 1830s and 1840s, when greater capital

investment prompted heightened pressures to exploit plant to the full, and brought a new emphasis on saving time as much as saving labour. The result was an intensification of controversies over the working day, and a gradual concession of the justification and need to regulate the hours of factory children (visible in the Acts of 1833, 1847, 1850). In this sense, the early Victorian period was something of a watershed, bringing the end of a long period of intensification of work pressures and erosion of leisure opportunities. The trend in Victorian Britain, haltingly and reluctantly, was downward. (For the impact on Victorian leisure cultures, see Peter Bailey's essay in this volume.)

Slowly but surely contemporaries began to conceive of their times as years of progress and advance. As Billie Melman has demonstrated (see her essay in this volume), early Victorian culture came to be marked by peculiarly intense engagements with 'history' and its various forms. During the 1840s the incipient evolutionism of the 1830s was articulated by Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844). *Vestiges* certainly did not produce any sort of consensus in favour of evolution; hostility was still widespread, not just from the religious establishment, but also within the scientific community. But it did produce converts (including A. R. Wallace, who was already an evolutionist by 1845), and reduced the shock value of evolution, making it a familiar concept to many. During the 1840s onwards geologists developed geological maps, which established firm agreement on the nature of the geological strata and their global equivalences. The idea of 'deep time' was popularised in books such as James Gray's *Earth's Antiquity* (1849). Historical and archaeological societies proliferated. Hampton Court was open free from November 1838 and attracted large crowds, as did the Tower of London. The early Victorian period was the heyday of the historical novel, while the medieval revival underway in the 1820s reached new heights in the excesses of the Eglinton tournament and Tennyson's Arthurian romances.

The upheavals of the pre-Victorian period all promoted a sense of religious crisis and challenge, but in turn also encouraged renewals and reinvigorations as organised religion took on the threats represented by industrialisation, urbanisation and scepticism. The early Victorian years were ones of Anglican revival, most visible in the claims of the Oxford movement to rediscover the purity of the early Church, but actually pervading all parties in the Church. The protestant religions shared in many respects a common culture: evangelicalism, anti-Catholicism, Puritanism, the pattern of congregational and parochial life, and all felt the challenges of early Victorian science and Biblical criticism. Nevertheless, as a revitalised Church faced a reenergised Nonconformity, enduring lines of interdenominational conflict were set down. The strident intolerance of the high church *Record* faced up to the shrill resentments of the *Nonconformist*. Sir James Graham's 1843 Factory Education Bill was in many respects the crucible of these developments, adding educational sensibilities to the mix, prompting the coining of the term 'voluntaryism', and helping crystallise pressures for disestablishment into the Anti-State Church Association, formed a year later in 1844. Lord Shaftesbury remarked that the educational standoff of 1843 fixed the limits of what either Dissent or Anglicanism could achieve, and it created (in Geoffrey Best's words) 'a kind of self-acting principle of equilibrium', which regulated the denominational struggles of the subsequent 50 years (quoted in Sellars 1977: 72). By the mid 1840s the fundamental configurations

of Victorian religion are discernible. Even though the Anglican church retained many of its privileges, Britain was a pluralistic society in a way that it had not been before. In education an indirect bipartisanship and denominational provision survived, albeit in various guises, until the end of the century. At the same time, the transformation of Rugby School under Thomas Arnold, with its emphasis on the school as place of serious education and the provision of the moral equipment required for a fruitful life, and the surge of new boarding school foundations in the 1840s, established the foundations of what John Tosh has described as ‘the moral rearmament of the Victorian governing classes’ (Tosh 2005: 85). (It also, as Victor Gonzalez-Macias’ essay in this volume demonstrates, contributed to the propagation of Victorian ideals across both formal and informal empire.) At the same time, vigorous efforts were made to reach out to the apparently unchurched urban masses. Between 1840 and 1855 the Ecclesiastical Commission endowed or augmented 5,300 parishes from offices scheduled for abolition by the Cathedrals Act of 1840. In the years after the establishment of the London City Mission in 1836, similar associations were established across the provinces, along with innumerable congregational and parochial societies. By the end of the decade virtually every London parish had its district visiting society. The multiplication of Anglican churches in urban areas, even setting aside the spread of Nonconformist alternatives, encouraged a *de facto* congregationalism in which parishes ceased to be the single provision for a discrete neighbourhood, and instead competed for congregations on the basis of their clergy, service and institutional life.

THE MID-VICTORIAN PERIOD

By the later 1840s many of the challenges characteristic of the early Victorian period were receding. It is possible to suggest that the events of 1846, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the consequent break-up of the Conservative Party under Peel, marked the end of this opening phase. Justifying 1846 as the opening date of his New Oxford History of England, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, Theo Hoppen has suggested that it ‘marked a decisive step in the process of reform inaugurated by the franchise concessions of 1832’ and was ‘the central rite of passage of Victorian politics’ (Hoppen 1998: 127). This is not entirely convincing. Certainly the decision for repeal was presented as a fundamental blow to the power of the aristocracy and an assertion of the political power of the new middle classes; but in reality Peel’s decision was a defensive one, to save further undermining of the landed interest by the creation of 40 shilling freeholds. The Tory Party was fractured, and its prospects further weakened by the death of Peel in 1850, leaving it effectively excluded from power for the next 30 years; but Manchester School radicalism was equally marginalised. Repeal did not mark the crucial repudiation of mercantilism and protectionism. Although the Conservative Party reluctantly accepted the electoral necessity of abandoning the Corn Laws in the 1850s, its commitment to free trade was always fragile. In the immediate aftermath Britain was still more protectionist than France, and the policy of reducing tariffs remained contested (see Howe’s essay in this volume). Reciprocity if not the forcible opening of global markets remained widespread aspirations, even amongst free trade radicals, despite the hostility of Cobden and his immediate followers.

Nevertheless, in the ensuing years repeal and further gradual progress towards tariff liberalisation via the 1849 repeal of the Navigation Acts seemed to have paved the way for an improvement in the economy. Historians now repudiate once conventional descriptions of the years from 1851–73 as the ‘mid-Victorian boom’. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that around 1850 the British economy entered calmer waters. Structural unemployment associated with the shift to mechanised production in the 1830s and 1840s became less obvious. (Indeed later critics have noted that the failure of the leading sectors of the British economy to continue to embrace technological improvements saw them already falling behind international rivals in these years.) Although punctuated by a number of sharp reverses, the period brought several short expansionary bursts and a much more buoyant labour market. The impression of domestic security and improvement was stiffened by the visible diminishing of not just middle- but also working-class radicalism. The Financial and Parliamentary Reform Association failed to inherit the momentum of the Anti-Corn Law League. For a while in 1848, revolutions in Europe seemed to presage a decisive transformation. Even once it became clear that the ferment would end only in defeat and containment, 1848 remained for contemporaries an extraordinary year, ‘the most memorable of the present century’ (Anon. 1849). But it was the immunity of Britain that struck contemporaries most. The continental upheavals encouraged the emergence of Christian socialism, and provided a formative moment in the experience of many liberals of the later Victorian years (Harvie 1976). But for Chartism the decisive government resistance to its mobilisation at Kennington Common in April 1848 left its strategy in tatters and its leadership disgraced, despite the accession of strength promised by the upsurge of nationalist rebelliousness in Ireland. Although the movement limped on, as John Saville notes, independent politics for most working people no longer appeared practicable, and their energies went into a wide variety of socially useful or emotionally satisfying organisations related more and more to the here and now (Saville 1987). The year 1848 seems to mark a decisive repudiation by the skilled working class of mass radicalism. Bureaucratisation and centralisations of the so-called ‘new model unionism’ of the 1850s in effect only consolidated and extended established craft union practices, building on shifts to national organisation that commenced in the 1830s and encompassed craft and factory organisation. This brought a new group of influential trade union leaders who helped to gain acceptance for unionism and establish a particular ‘craft union’ style: defensive, of limited aspiration, sectional, preoccupied with respectability and male. Saville’s argument, largely consistent with Barry Godfrey’s discussion of the disciplinary institutions of Victorian culture in his chapter in this volume, is that accounts of the mid-century watershed that stress economic improvement must be balanced by a recognition of the role the exercise of state power played in working-class demobilisation.

If 1848 saw the final flourish of early Victorian physical force radicalism, it was 1851 that confirmed the opening of a new phase of the Victorian period. Hence George Stocking’s description of 1851 as a ‘precipice in time’ (Stocking 1987: 4). At the heart of this fracture was the Great Exhibition. ‘It inaugurates an era’, noted the *Manchester Examiner and Times* (Anon. 1852b: 4). Between May and October 1851 over six million visitors drawn from across Britain and the globe entered the magnificent glass and iron ‘Crystal Palace’ in Hyde Park. The Exhibition not only

affirmed Britain's global industrial leadership, it contributed to a reaffirmation of monarchy and especially of the place of Prince Albert. The sober behaviour of the many visitors and the collaboration of so many working-class committees offered reassurance about the stability and viability of British society. Contemporaries celebrated the Exhibition as a monument to middle-class values and success, a triumph of technology (Davis 1999). Whatever its direct influence, the Exhibition came for Victorians to occupy a privileged symbolic position: as A.V. Dicey put it, looking back from 1914, 'The Exhibition of 1851 had a significance which is hardly understood by the present generation. . . . The ideas of the political economists, and above all the dogma of *laissez-faire*, had, it was thought, achieved a final victory' (quoted in Rance 1991: 23). Contemporaries saw the Great Exhibition as announcing a period of optimism and progress, ushering in a time 'of internal balance, and widespread though not universal contentment' (Briggs 1967: 394).

It certainly consolidated the era of spectacle. The Crystal Palace itself opened up significant new possibilities for using natural light in large buildings, a 'comprehensive institutional change' as Andrew Miller has described it, 'part of a complex of developments in museums, department stores, exhibitions and galleries', as well as in domestic spaces (Miller 1995: 6). It also provided a model for a series of new museums and galleries, such as the Oxford Museum and the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, where largescale iron and glass roofing created light-filled exhibition spaces and also arcades and shops, such as the Crystal Palace Bazaar, a shopping galleria off Oxford Street, which had a dramatic stained glass ceiling under a glass and iron roof. In turn, the spread of plate glass inspired a number of new 'glass cultures', such as the aquaria craze of the 1850s. Glass display cases helped to objectify and open out to view the artefacts they contained and the cultures and histories they sought to represent, offering, for Anthony Trollope, a metaphor for Victorian fiction writing generally (Garrett 1980: 190–91).

Although historians are rightly wary of arguments that rely on assessments of shifts in 'mood' or atmosphere, there is little doubt that the years after 1851 were much less fraught with social tensions than those before 1848. A new consensus emerged around elements of the Victorian ideology, such as the tenets of classical political economy that had struggled to establish general assent in the 1840s. Herbert Spencer's *Social Statistics* (1851) offered a manual of liberal individualism and evolutionary sociology, presenting the 'starvation of the idle' as 'the decrees of a large, far-seeing, benevolence' (quoted in Stoddart 1998: 77). As Michael Lobban's essay demonstrates, the *laissez-fairism* of the state was never crude or monolithic, and in the case of judicial law often expressed in surprisingly moralistic terms. Even so, the limits were real: symptomatically, when Ruskin published his highly critical *Unto this Last* essays in the *Cornhill* in 1860, the outcry was so great that the series had to be abandoned. As the centrifugal forces of the early Victorian crisis waned, so tendencies to fragmentation and accommodation gained impetus. The cultural differences between a largely craft-based 'labour aristocracy' and the less-skilled remainder widened, as the aristocrats constructed a largely exclusive network of unions, voluntary associations and styles of life. In the textile districts, the larger employers dulled the force of social conflict through the articulation of often complex processes of factory paternalism: not merely a matter

of wages, but also of a 'stream of social life', works dinners, libraries, baths and burial societies, banners and brass bands (Joyce 1980: 145). Outside of the larger employers similar roles were played by structures of philanthropy, which both created ties of reciprocal duty and obligation, but also, along with municipal leadership, provided a basis for the assertion of more diffuse forms of middle-class authority (see Donna Loftus' chapter in this volume). In rural areas even national associations like the Oddfellows operated to enforce elite leadership, dominated by local clergy and gentry. Philanthropy and the parallel organisations of rational recreation encouraged the cult of respectability, a powerful structuring distinction that cut across class, its distinctions no respecters of occupation, income or residence. By creating generalised codes of behaviour that emphasised moral worth and character, notions of respectability provided a channel into the conventional orthodoxies of mid-Victorianism, including the ideas of self-reliance and individual improvement codified and celebrated by Samuel Smiles in works such as *Self-Help* (1859), *Character* (1871) and *Thrift* (1875).

The mid-century transition should not be overplayed. In recent years economic historians have pointed out that the statistical evidence for the sort of economic progress that would justify mid-Victorian smugness is uneven at best; but for whatever reasons contemporaries remained assured, confident and convinced of Britain's success. There was substantial expansion in coal mining and mechanical engineering. Railway construction continued apace; the just over 6,000 miles of track in 1850 had been extended to nearly 13,500 in 1870, while passenger journeys had grown almost five-fold. Britain consolidated its world leadership in ship-building and shipping. The value of British imports and exports grew substantially, its share of world trade peaking (at around a quarter) in the mid 1860s, and its share of manufacturing exports perhaps as high as 40 per cent. Rising prices from around 1850 to the early 1870s bolstered optimism, without providing a barrier to improvements in working-class living standards, and especially diets, even if perhaps only from the 1860s. Even so, the economic system continued to be vulnerable to sharp crises (the one of 1857–58 being particularly acute), and progress seems to have come, where it came at all, in fits and starts.

Urban conditions remained stubbornly resistant to improvement. Resort to Royal Commissions peaked in the 1850s, but remained frequent until the 1880s. The 1848 Public Health Act and the General Board of Health it established had little noticeable impact on sanitary conditions, and the General Board was abandoned in 1858. Unsurprisingly, there was little evidence of any change in the Victorian demographic regime, although the mid-Victorian years do seem to have produced a temporary hiatus in the decline of the birth rate. The proportion of children under 14 peaked around 1825, but remained largely stable from the 1840s to the 1880s before beginning its steeper twentieth-century decline. Crude death rates remained relatively constant from 1837 to the early 1880s (with a slight sign of improvement from the 1860s). Patterns of sickness and ill-health showed similar stabilities (see Mackinnon's essay in this volume). Although 1849 was the last widespread epidemic in Britain, cholera was almost a 'Victorian' disease: it appeared first after 1815, but had its first major outbreak in 1832, and only came under effective control in the final years of the century (aided by Koch's discovery of the cholera vibrio in 1883–84).

The abandonment of the General Board of Health in 1858 reflected the retreat of the Benthamite and paternalist impulses of the 1840s and the triumph of a more permissive Liberalism. The mid-Victorian years were ones of Liberal domination: between 1847 and 1868 the Conservatives lost six successive general elections and held power only briefly in minority. In the wake of the Conservative split of 1846, Westminster politics entered a period of uncertainty and flux, which contributed to a widespread sense of stasis. Although the migration of the Peelites into the new Liberal alliance took time, the broad outlines of the two-party system were not challenged. Recognising the degree to which Victorian parties remained loose confederations with little central control over localities, there is no need to talk about decline in party in the wake of Peel's 'apostasy'. (Indeed what really shocked Tories about Peel was not so much his policies as his disregard of the importance of party.) The Peelites retained their own coherent identity and subsumed themselves relatively happily into the Liberal ranks in 1857, after which the two-party alignment was re-established without comment or commotion. Meanwhile, a succession of Liberal governments took up the laissez-faire tenets of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), that the state should stand aside wherever possible and leave public action to the individual and voluntary associations. The 'great' Gladstonian budgets of 1853–55 and 1859–65 extended the principles of free trade and retrenchment. The consolidation of the Gladstonian state bore fruit in the accommodation of working-class radicalism. Many in the working class might still be deeply suspicious of privilege and authority, might still rail against 'class government' and slave-driving employers, but they did not feel as fundamentally alienated from the state or the political system as their political forebears (Lawrence 1998: 87). Liberal hegemony was cemented by its dominance of the newspaper field, which was certainly tightened in these years; but the most significant development was probably the emergence of the major provincial dailies, responding to the cheapening in the press brought by a further round of removals of duties on newspapers (advertising duty 1853, stamp duty 1855 and paper duty 1861), and parallel developments of the rotary press. The result was a dramatic expansion: as many as three quarters of the newspapers in existence in 1867 had been established since 1853. Journalism helped sustain the culture of extra-parliamentary pressure, while at the same time encouraging a proliferation of pressure groups, which assisted the relative autonomy of the governing elite (see Law's essay in this volume).

At the same time, under the influence of Palmerston, who was the party's dominant figure from 1848 to his death in 1865, Liberalism in the mid-Victorian years adopted a more interventionist inflexion of the traditional themes of British foreign policy. A willingness to implement a more assertive foreign policy was visible in Palmerston's successful likening in 1850 of Britain to the Roman empire, and culminated in the policies that eventually produced the 1853–56 Crimean War. In the decade after the end of the war Palmerston's policy, despite presentational elements that were often objectionable to political friends as well as foes, reinforced a consistent line of policy – the avoidance of war, management by an informal concert of great powers, modest support for British trading interests, resistance to Russian expansion in the Near and Middle East as a threat to British imperial interests in India and the Far East, and support for the extension of liberal regimes

in Europe. In this Palmerston and his policy reflected the extent to which from the 1840s the international orientation of the British economy had been extended and intensified. Debate about the 'balance sheet' of imperialism visibly dissipated, its fire not to be rekindled until the later 1890s. Radical attacks were dismissed. Imperial commitment remained understated, but pride in empire was affirmed and, as Patrick Brantlinger's essay in this volume shows, Britain's diverse cultural engagements with empire filled out. Krishan Kumar's essay examines the way colonies came to be seen as an instance of the 'high destiny which this exercise of our national energy develops [sic]' (*Manchester Guardian*, quoted in Martin 1975: 92). Piecemeal *ad hoc* imperial expansion continued, although in the 20 years after 1848 change in the extent of the empire was of unparalleled smallness. At the same time, and not without tensions and suspicions, as the essays in this volume of Finn, Inglis and Gikandi demonstrate, versions of a common British culture were reformulated and reproduced in both settler and non-settler colonies.

Consciousness of empire steadily deepened; 1851 was not without its worrying portents. For *The Times*, one blemish had been that 'We have seen a British colony in South Africa [becoming] a settlement of herdsmen and traders lapsing into a chain of military posts held with vast bloodshed and costs against implacable savages' (Anon. 1852a). If the Crimean War emphasised the place of the near East in the geography of empire, the Indian Mutiny, as Lauren Goodlad's chapter explores, threw into doubt previous understandings of empire as a temporary tutelage. The suppression of the revolt of 1865 in Jamaica revealed a more brutal impulse to imperial authority. Racial attitudes were beginning to harden; notions of trusteeship were being transformed (see the essays in this volume of Kennedy, Lester and Pernau).

The strengthening of imperial and global perspectives was facilitated by the technological revolution in global communications achieved in the 1850s, as the age of railways spread to Britain's colonies in North America and India, and opened out into the more general age of steam. Rapid falls in shipping costs greatly encouraged the expansion of world trade and economic specialisation. A global telegraphic network was gradually extended, as the technical problems posed by laying long distance submarine cables were overcome. Links to the continent and Ireland were in place by 1851–52. The first attempts to connect Britain to America and to India in the 1850s failed. But as a result of the work of William Thompson, more reliable links to India and the United States were secured by 1866. By the early 1870s a global system (albeit patchy) was in place (China and Japan were connected in 1870, Australia in 1871) (see Hugill in this volume). Britain dominated global communications. John Pender's Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company made two-thirds of the world's cables before 1900 and most of the other third was made by three other British companies. British control of these networks enabled her to manipulate critical flows of diplomatic information. There was a 'telegraphic moment' in mid-Victorian Britain, when excitement with the potential of the telegraph as a cutting edge communications technology was widely celebrated in poetry and prose.

The Crimean War also marked a stage in the development of Victorian visual cultures, not least in the acceptance of the camera, not just as a new way of seeing but also a new mode of documenting, a perception widely established by the

exhibition and sales of Roger Fenton's photographs of the Crimean War, and confirmed by subsequent usage by explorers, military expeditions, colonial administrators, police forces and medical practitioners. Photography came fully into its own in the 1850s. Within a few years of the patenting of the system in France in 1854, as many as 300 million *cartes de visite* were being sold annually in Britain, generating a thriving culture of trade in and collection of photographic portraits of well-known figures, and contributing to emerging cultures of celebrity. From this point on it is not too far fetched to suggest that Victorian culture was dominated by 'centred subjectivity' of the photographic print, the omniscient narrator and the cartographer. Despite recognitions of the problems of misperception emphasised by the craze for optical toys like the stereoscope that marked the 1850s, the photograph was overwhelmingly seen as a direct representation of nature. The camera, Lady Eastlake observed in 1857, could 'give evidence of facts, as minutely and as impartially as, to our shame, only an unreasoning machine can' (quoted in Robertson 1978: 186). The photographic was adopted as a standard of truth. In the preparation of *Derby Day* W.P. Frith employed a photographer to take pictures of as many racegoers as he could, while the *Saturday Review* praised the 'photographic reproduction' provided by George Eliot's fiction (Witemeyer 1979: 2). Harro Maas' essay in this volume considers one particular inflexion of this standard.

W. L. Burn, in his influential study *The Age of Equipoise*, presented the formal family photograph as the epitome of mid-Victorianism. Certainly ideals of family and of home were celebrated and extended in the mid-Victorian years, reinforced by many streams: the ideas of Comte, popularised after the translation of his *System of Positive Polity* in 1851; of Ruskin as developed in *Sesame and Lilies*; of Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House* (first published 1854–56 and subsequently extended). The middle-class fiction market was dominated by the domestic sagas of Dinah Mulock and Margaret Oliphant, perhaps launched by Bulwer Lytton's *The Caxtons* of 1849. Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, originally published in 1838, went through nearly 40 editions from 1850 to 1860. Separate spheres ideologies tightened their grip across the social spectrum. The circumscribed mid-Victorian women's movement, associated above all with the Langham Place Group, which flourished from the later 1850s to the mid-1860s, challenged the constraints that flowed from the practice of separate spheres without confronting its ideological underpinnings. Their preoccupation was more access to education and employment than enfranchisement; their watchwords were caution and decorum.

Although the fact of deep time was widely accepted, and the outlines of the earth's geological history established, much remained to be confirmed and understood. From the 1840s onwards geologists focused on establishing firm agreement on the nature of the geological strata and their global equivalences, developed in geological maps. But even by 1859 only relatively small areas of the globe had been mapped geologically. From the mid-1850s one of London's most popular attractions was the palaeontology park created at the Sydenham pleasure gardens, complete with life-sized prehistorical animals from Triassic reptiles to the dinosaurs of the Cretaceous period, which made visual representations of deep time accessible to a vast new public. Forty thousand people attended the opening. Models and posters circulated widely. Books, such as Guillaume Louis Figuier's *The World Before*

the Deluge (1863) reflected an enduring fascination with the pictorial representation of deep time. During the mid-century years a historical horizon immense in comparison to what had been conventional became widely accepted. The visit of Donati's comet in 1858, and not apparently due again for 2,100 years, reminded mid-Victorians of the vast timescales of space. Generally even writers determined to retain the Biblical narrative accepted the overall outlines of the new theories, while adopting a range of compromises or special pleadings. As archaeological explorations of the ancient civilisations of the Middle East, such as the discoveries of Layard and Rawlinson at Nimrud and Nineveh in the later 1840s and 1850s, worked to thrust the history of humanity further back into prehistory, so such stratagems came under increasing strain.

In this respect 1859 has some claim as marking a concentrated moment of change, at least in the intellectual history of the Victorian period. The appearance of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*, followed quickly afterwards by *Essays and Reviews* (1860), brought to a greatly more powerful focus a number of pressures that had been building over the previous 20 years. By advancing the theory of 'natural selection', *The Origin of Species* offered a thorough-going challenge to the centrality of God in nature fundamental to Christian cosmology, and to the wider arguments of natural theology that the adaptation of species was evidence of divine design. The *Origin* paved the way for popular texts like Charles Lyell's widely read *The Antiquity of Man* (1863) and Sir John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times* (1865). By 1868 the evidence of the antiquity of man was so overwhelming that even outspoken opponents were forced to concede. But neither the *Origin*, nor infamous exchanges like that between Huxley and Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford in 1860, in which Wilberforce enquired as to whether Darwin was descended from an ape on his mother's side or his father's side, produced the intellectual rout of religion, never mind its institutional demobilisation. The consolations of natural theology really only dissolved in the final years of the century. There remained rich resources for the incorporation of evolution, and even elements of natural selection, into essentially religious frameworks, as the works of Philip Gosse, one of Darwin's most important popularisers, demonstrated, just as there remained a powerful force of theism in Victorian scientific culture.

In Biblical criticism, scholarly dispute became public controversy in the mid 1850s. There was a gradual acceptance of the appropriateness of applying critical methods to the Bible. Benjamin Jowett's edition of *Paul's Epistles* (1855) suggested that intellectuals of Jowett's stamp at least felt the need to promulgate a Christianity more open to non-literal interpretation, and less hostile to science. His call in *Essays and Reviews* to 'Interpret the Scriptures like any other book' was deeply controversial, but his essay sought not to diminish the Bible to the status of just another book, but to adopt critical approaches so as to increase its 'moral power' by revealing its 'true meaning' (Jones 2007: 62–63). After 1860 the controversies over *Essays and Reviews* and Bishop Colenso's *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862) finally brought Biblical criticism into the mainstream. Certainly the failure to impeach the authors of *Essays and Reviews* encouraged an atmosphere of discernibly greater freedom, although perhaps not science's assertion of intellectual hegemony.

As the first half of the 1860s progressed, signs of strain in the mid-Victorian equipoise began to extend beyond the implications of Darwinism. Despite widespread support for the Confederacy, the mobilisation of support, especially in the textile districts, for Lincoln and the Union cause helped rekindle support for further franchise extension. Above all the 1860s are associated with the rapid emergence and immense popularity of the sensation fiction launched by Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White* (1859–60), and echoed in Dion Boucicault's play *The Colleen Bawn*, which helped initiate an important shift in Victorian theatre to the long run. Lynda Nead's essay in this volume illustrates some of the tensions around social and gender conventions increasingly visible in the 1860s. In sensation, and its many resonances in art, politics, music and even in sectarian tensions, Nicholas Daly has suggested it is possible to see the beginnings of a modern cultural consciousness (Daly 2009).

THE VICTORIAN *ENTR'ACTE*

Unsurprisingly, contemporaries saw in the second half of the 1860s a further phase of transition, from one phase of the Victorian period to another. In the period after 1867 the strains of mid-Victorian Britain became more acute. Conventionally the marker of this transition has been the second Reform Act of 1867. Certainly contemporaries experienced 1867 as a year of crisis without parallel since 1848, if not before. 'Morally and physically', the editor of the *English Mechanic* wrote, 'the year 1867 has had few equals since the era of the last great war and we fervently trust we will never see its like again' (quoted in Russell 1983: 224). The speed with which the reform crisis of the mid 1860s was whipped up, and the unanticipated reappearance of civil disorder on the streets of London during the 1866 Hyde Park riots, created an unexpectedly sudden sense of disturbance, heightened by the commercial crisis created by the collapse of Overend and Gurney in May 1866, trade union violence in Sheffield in the following October, bread riots in the East End of London in January 1867 and Fenian 'outrages' in England and Ireland that followed in the spring. The Queen was not alone amongst the elite in fearing revolution in the early months of 1867 (Cowling 1967).

Revolution was never a realistic possibility, but the political crisis produced a frisson of *bouleversement*. Contemporaries tended to speak in apocalyptic terms of parliamentary reform, as a 'leap in the dark' or even a shooting of Niagara Falls. In Manchester in 1867 even the leading Liberals were said to be 'frightened out of their wits by the borough franchise' (quoted in Vincent 1966: 251). Liberal intellectuals like Matthew Arnold remained calmer, but in works such as *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) expressed alarm at the consequences of the widened franchise. Meanwhile, from 1867 to 1870, other developments contributed to the sense of entering uncharted waters. The judgement in *Hornby vs Close* (1867) appeared to deprive trades unions of any legal protection of their funds, and encouraged the formation of the Trades Union Congress, which met for the first time the following year. In 1867 the women's movement was given new impetus by a speech of J. S. Mill in the Commons; the publication two years later of his *The Subjection of Women*, significantly written in the 1850s, but withheld until the end of the 1860s because Mill judged publication futile before that point, suggested that cracks in the

carapace of separate spheres were finally appearing. Britain's poor showing at the 1867 Paris Exhibition suddenly called into question the easy superiority of 1851. The emergence of Prussia after its defeats of Austria in 1866 and France in 1870–71 prompted the *Edinburgh Review* to suggest that 'the system of European policy has been destroyed' (quoted by Stoddart 1998: 72). Meanwhile the British North America Act of March 1867 created the nation of Canada, while reform in New Zealand gave four seats to Maori representatives for the first time (for this see Lester's essay below). Looking back to 1867 from 1872 Walter Bagehot saw 'a change not in one point, but in a thousand points . . . a change not of particular details but of pervading spirit'; part of a generational watershed, whose origins could be traced back to the death of Palmerston in 1865 and Russell's retirement from public life in 1866 (to which was soon added the death of Derby in 1869) (Bagehot 1872: 3).

The period from the later 1860s to the mid 1880s did not establish a clear identity to contemporaries. It does not offer a self-contained literary moment. Even the minor novelists, such as Charles Reade and Henry Kingsley, or Rhoda Broughton whose work is perhaps most characteristic of the period, are far from bound by it. Not surprisingly, recent scholarship has demonstrated a tendency to skate over the period, and an unwillingness to give it close attention. Yet despite tendencies to hook these years uneasily to the later Victorian period, or perhaps to split them around 1875 so as to generate a version of the conventional tripartite division, closer inspection suggests an important difference from the years that preceded and follow them; if only as a bridge, an *entr'acte*, a point at which mid- and late-Victorian tectonic plates slid across each other. The reform agitation of the mid 1860s and the fear that it might presage a more general breakdown in the social order and a reversion into a form of barbarism looms large. The period coincides largely with Arnold's career as cultural critic. Ruskin's mature criticism, including *Fors Clavigera* (1871–84), in which (as with other writing) his criticisms of contemporary middle-class values became more and more strident, and with John Morley's editorship of the *Fortnightly Review* (1867–82). In their different ways all three were concerned with the acute tensions within Liberalism brought on not just by the challenges of the post-1867 political system, but also by the confusing combination of a growing sense of economic depression alongside an increasingly consumerist, and indeed materialist, society, the target of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875). The 'episodic shift', obliquely experienced, that Williamson has identified around 1867, which ushered in a sustained period of declining income inequality, called into question the social exclusions on which the Liberal ideal was based (Williamson 1985), just as anxieties about the fragmentation of Victorian intellectual life began to grip (see Whyte's essay in this volume).

Ironically, the impact of the Act of 1867 was less dramatic than contemporaries had feared, reflecting the intention of politicians that the franchise extensions should effect adjustment rather than revolution. The Liberals remained in office for 12 of the 18 years between 1868 and 1885, although Disraeli's victory in 1874 did hint at shifts in the terms of political conflict. The parties continued to manifest 'two opposite moods of the English mind', as Salisbury put it in 1872 (quoted in Taylor 1975: 37). The year 1867, for all its apparent daring, did little more than make

the good the worst of the anomalies untouched by 1832. It may have reinvigorated the cultures of popular politics, but they remained predicated on the belief that civic rights derived from property ownership, even if the requisite degree of property ownership was diluted. A borough householder franchise tied to payments of rates was created, producing an electorate just over a quarter working class, more so in England, but less in Scotland and Wales. The traditional pro-rural balance was maintained: only 52 seats were redistributed, and large cities like Birmingham and Manchester were fobbed off with an extra MP. Between 1867 and 1885, 106 of the 263 English borough members sat for towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Additional restrictions made the apparent generosity of the franchise extension less so in reality. The £10 rating franchise for lodgers was so high, and subject to so many other conditions of registration, that it rarely amounted to very much; and the average period of residence required (which worked out at 25 months) denied many householders the vote. Perhaps as much was done by the 1872 Ballot Act and the concurrent abandonment of the hitherto important principle of the personal payment of rates. Parliament remained at least partially autonomous of the electorate as the ability of the Liberal government to deflect the considerable extra-parliamentary pressure of its supporters indicated.

This autonomy was significant, because there were signs in the years after 1867 of the promise of a more interventionist state. Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) took up the cudgels against what he saw as extra-parliamentary liberalism's vacuous pursuit of 'an Englishman's right to do what he likes', to hoot, threaten, riot, as he likes (quoted in Hall *et al.* 2000: 186). The once popular notion that the 1870s saw a shift from laissez-fairism to collectivism is no longer tenable, but the tenets of laissez-faire small government were being re-examined and reforms of the civil service in the 1870s did offer the promise of greater administrative capacity. Although there was no breach in Gladstonian financial orthodoxy, an order in council of 4 June 1870 swept away nomination and patronage, and made competition full and open, encouraging a visible shift to a professionalised bureaucracy. The new liberalism emerging around 1870 in the writings of T. H. Green, in which the idea of the common good was increasingly deployed to justify a state that took on wider social responsibilities, worried more traditional laissez-faire Liberals (one response was Hebert Spencer's *The Man Versus the State* [1884] [Den Otter 1996]). The conflicts of the 1870s over trade union reform suggested that the amenability of Parliament to greater popular pressure had opened up a gap between it and the courts, which prompted sustained working-class pressure for effective union recognition through the 1870s. But there was little appetite, even amongst the new working-class voters, for any relaxation of retrenchment, and the record of the governments from 1868–85 in extending state action was modest. Extra-parliamentary pressure was often disappointed. The eclipse of influential mid-Victorian associations like the Social Science Association was symbolic. The operation of the ballot, concurrent developments in party discipline and the rise of programmatic politics, which culminated in the Midlothian campaign of 1879–80 and then Chamberlain's 'Unauthorised Programme' of 1885, all suggested that 'the age of the politically non-aligned pressure group was now over' (Roberts 2004: 242).

The preference continued to be for permissive legislation, 'the characteristic of a free people' in Disraeli's words (quoted in Hoppen, 1998: 616), like the 1875

Public Health Act or the Artisans' Dwellings Act, which empowered local authorities to engage in sanitary improvement, but did not enforce it. Even so, the balance of central-government relations was beginning to shift. The introduction of a new regime of grants in aid by Disraeli's 1874–80 Conservative government, progressively increasing in importance in the following decades, presaged a decisive shift in the 'fiscal terrain' (Price 1999: 152). The 1877 Prisons Act, which transferred both ownership and control of prisons to the Home Office, indicated the state's willingness to expropriate local government property and understanding of local government as merely an executive agency of central government. Even as central oversight intensified from the 1870s, Victorian government continued to be dominated by what has been called the 'political-diplomatic' approach, which did not seek to impose uniform technocratic solutions from the centre, but rather to deploy generalist inspectors who would work flexibly with local bodies, via persuasion and advice, to effect improvements in local services (Bellamy 1988: 117). The Local Government Board continued to lack key powers, remained entangled in a mass of detailed procedural checks without strategic direction, failed to develop technical authority in areas over which it had sight, and continued to implement statutes flexibly. The 'edifice of localism held fast' (Price 1999: 187).

Not only that, it flourished. Liberal policy in this period aimed at empowering localities to improve public morals, encouraging a surge of municipalisation and the take up of permissive powers. Led by Joseph Chamberlain, elected councillor in 1869 and mayor 1873, and supported by the local Nonconformist elite, Birmingham developed a new 'civic gospel' and a new 'municipal socialism', and although other cities were not always quick to follow suit, the scope of municipal action was steadily extended. One index of this was the spread of municipal art galleries, established or significantly augmented at Birmingham (1867, 1885), Liverpool (1877) and Manchester (1877, 1883). But its fullest expression was provided by the system established by the 1870 Education Act. The 15 years after the passing of the Act and the Cross Commission of 1885–87 were ones of dramatic and almost constant development, which saw the gradual consolidation and extension of a system of ratepayer control of education that accommodated local – often religious – conflicts, adding the power to enforce attendance in 1876 and making it compulsory in 1880. From 1870 to 1880 the combined attendance at denominational and board schools increased from 1.15 million to 2.75 million. The educational ferment also touched higher education. By the early 1870s the ancient universities were embracing what quickly became known as 'university extension lectures'. Between 1871 and 1884, 11 new provincial institutions of higher education were established. The mid-Victorian campaigns for education for women bore fruit in the formation of Girton and Newnham between 1869 and 1871, and later Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall (1879) (see Anderson's essay in this volume).

The formation of the women's colleges was part of a broader set of forces affecting women in these years. The later 1860s saw traditions of women's activism in abolition, the Anti-Corn Law League and temperance coalesce into a more vigorous, coherent and independent women's movement, associated with the formation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage (1867), the Ladies National Association (1869), the launching of the *Women's Suffrage Journal* (1870) and the career of Josephine Butler (Caine 1992). This movement offered only a limited repudiation

of Victorian gender assumptions, seeking to exploit rather than challenge ideologies of female moral superiority, but it encouraged some limited erosion of gender restrictions. The 1869 Municipal Franchise Act and the 1870 Education Act gave votes to unmarried women. A public role as elected officers became available on the new School Boards. The passage in 1870 of the Married Women's Property Act, and its extension in 1882, tempered the legal abnegation of women within marriage. The work of Octavia Hill and the Charity Organisation Society reappropriated the moral diagnosis of early Victorian social reformers to the female supervision of lady district visitors. The fast and loose 'Girl of the Period' made her appearance in the cultural criticism of the later 1860s.

The women's movement of these years remained dominated by moral and religious preoccupations, as did politics and culture more generally. Although Darwinism finally established itself as a stable force – 'what had been nebulous became specific and doctrinal about 1870' (Desmond 1997: 11) – there was no Darwinian overthrow of religion. The numbers prepared to abandon belief in the hand of the creator before the end of Victoria's reign were tiny, and large sections of Nonconformity remained happily in denial of Darwinism into the 1890s. Texts like St George Mivart's *Contemporary Evolution* (1876), whatever its scientific limitations, provided resources for those anxious to resist the ultimate implications of Darwinian naturalism. William Thompson's 1868 address *On Geological Time* reined in previous expansion of the age of the earth by drastically limiting the time during which it could have sustained life. Acceptance and familiarity deprived geology of the iconoclastic force it had once possessed. Even Darwin's own loss of faith has been traced to his failure to find effective consolation from religion at the death of his daughter Annie, rather than the impact of his evolutionary ideas (Moore 2002).

Nevertheless, the period from the late 1860s saw a weakening of the exclusionary force of religion and a more visibly tolerated rejection of the conventional forms of orthodox Christianity. The appearance from 1862–79 of the seven volumes of Colenso's *The Pentateuch* steadily developed criticism of the literal veracity of the early Biblical narratives. During the 1870s, not least via Matthew Arnold's various contributions – *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and *God the Bible* (1875) – the cultural force of Biblical criticism was extended. The implications of most of this work were as much agnostic as antagonistic. Indeed, the 1870s also saw the codification of agnosticism (a term coined by Huxley in 1869) as an intellectual position (see Cox essay in this volume). The *Fortnightly Review* had challenged the authority of organised religion; but had, as Morley conceded on retirement, perhaps only offered 'an elegant dabbling in infidelity' (quoted in Buckley 1952: 190). Institutionalised alternatives flourished, without ever achieving broad popularity. In 1867 Positivism obtained its first formal base in London, quickly taking on the character of an alternative religious sect. In this it was one of a number of non-denominational, theistic, preaching/lecturing houses that flourished in London during this period.

It is easy to portray the relations of science and religion as fundamentally antithetical in this period, and certainly figures like Huxley and Tyndall (whose 1874 Belfast Address provided a symbolic moment) sought to establish the scientific method as the only rational basis for belief, and confine religion to a narrow sphere

of faith and spirit. But the men of science's conflict was less with religion than with theology and with the clerical establishment. The result was a scientific establishment that operated in surprisingly clerical modes, and a gradual acceptance by protagonists on both sides of a stand-off of the sort articulated in William Graham's *The Creed of Science: Religious, Moral and Social* (1881), or Arthur Balfour's *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* (1879), which allocated science and religion different spheres of authority (see Lightman's essay in this volume). Meanwhile, through the informal influence of the 'X-Club' from 1864, and later via the new academic periodicals, such as *Nature* (established 1869), the new men of science were beginning to cement their organisational dominance over British science, and orchestrate calls for its institutional development. The establishment of the South Kensington Science Schools in 1871 and the various reports of the Devonshire Commission from 1872–75 spoke of a new state organisation of science. But the great hopes of the scientific community that the Devonshire recommendations would produce greater state support for science went unrealised. There was no new scientific hegemony. The two popular quarterlies, the *Popular Science Review* (1861–82) and the *Quarterly Journal of Science* (1864–85), and the monthly *Scientific Review* (1865–83), did not outlast the 1880s.

The same can be said of the aesthetic movement. In 1870 the *Saturday Review* could dismiss the importance of Ruskin for 'modern undergraduates schooled in French realism and emerging impressionism' (quoted in Stoddart 1998: 49), but to mainstream middle-class opinion, aestheticism was a controversial but marginal presence, its status summed up by the penny damages awarded to J. W. Whistler in his famous libel conflict with John Ruskin in 1877. Walter Pater's withdrawal of the notorious conclusion to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) was not a recantation, but was an acknowledgement of the need for more defensible positions against orthodox hostility. Swinburne, despite his early 'fleshliness', turned away from a self-sufficient art to moral and political purpose. William Morris, despite his social radicalism, remained convinced that 'it [was] not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics and religion' (quoted in Buckley 1952: 177). While Oxford undergraduates imbibed Pater, the wider nation was more likely to pick up Hugh Haweis' *Music and Morals*, an affirmation of the moral purpose of music that went through more than 20 editions in the 30 years after its appearance in 1871.

Organised religion, Anglican and Dissenting, remained pervasive and powerful, especially in the provinces. The later 1860s had seen a number of significant Nonconformist victories: the abolition of the compulsory payment of rates (1868), the Endowed Schools Act (1869), which was seen to breach Anglican control of endowed education, and the repeal of the University Test Acts in 1871. But these reforms were of only limited purchase, especially for plebeian radicalism. In the early 1870s the Liberation Society was perhaps at the height of its popularity, and powerful religious currents flowed into popular agitations for temperance and licensing reform, urban improvement and political reform. The national political culture remained rooted in local institutions and processes in which organised religion often played a decisive role. Inevitably, in the sudden expansion of organised football that occurred in the 1870s, parochial and congregational teams took a leading role. At the same time, popular support for the Tichborne Claimant (at its

height in the early 1870s and not fully exhausted until the collapse of the movement's paper, *The Englishman*, in 1886), and for Bradlaugh's claims for a place in parliament, especially powerful in the early 1880s, were both invigorated by longstanding traditions of popular radicalism in which anti-clericalism vied with anti-aristocratic sentiment.

From 1867 to the mid 1880s the established modes of communication were supplemented by a number of fundamental technological innovations, the first typewriter (1873), the early telephone (1876) and Edison's phonograph (see Picker's essay in this volume). The provincial evening press expanded rapidly, from 22 titles in 1872 to 85 in 1892, mostly half-penny papers aimed at more of a working-class audience. After 1872 Tillotson's Fiction Bureau incorporated the empire into a common field of fictional serialisation. The emergence of national sporting competitions was one sign of the cultural consolidation being effected by Victorian modes of communication. After the arrival of the new serious monthlies in the 1860s, *Argosy* (1865), *Tinsley's Magazine* (1867), especially the serious monthlies *Macmillan's Magazine* (1859), *Cornhill* (1860), and then the *Contemporary* (1866) and *The Fortnightly* (1865), this period was the heyday of the periodicals of general culture. But the expanding reading public, the development of mass market newspapers, and the proliferation of cheap titles engendered fresh, if hardly novel, anxieties about the sustainability of rational debate. The late 1860s also saw first attempts at more professionalised/expert periodicals, *Nature* and *The Academy* (both established 1869). In this sense, the 1870s were a halfway house to the disciplinary specialism and academic authority that increasingly characterised the late Victorian years. This transitional flavour is symbolised by the career of the Metaphysical Society, 1869–80, and its monthly debate of leading intellectuals on matters of science and religion. The society brought together a breadth of view, from Cardinal Manning to Huxley, from Henry Sidgwick to Frederic Harrison, and its petering out by the start of the 1880s reflected not just the tightening hold of academic professionalisation but also the waning of the liberal intellectual hegemony of the previous 40 years.

The compression of space was becoming not just a domestic, but a global phenomenon: 'The world is growing so small that every patch of territory begins to be looked upon as a stray farm is by a County magnate', observed *The Times* in 1874 (quoted in Darwin 2009: 66). Although diplomatic reluctance to acquire new global obligations remained, the years after 1867 brought a new recognition of the empire as a systemic whole, and a new enthusiasm for Britain as the leading global power. Ruskin, in his inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1870, urged his audience to 'make your country again . . . for all the world a source of light', to found colonies and strengthen British power (quoted in Judd 1996: 121). After the successful establishment of the Canadian Confederation in 1867, the 'federal panacea almost became an imperial obsession' (Hyam 2010: 77). During the 1870s and 1880s the Royal Geographical Society's surveying and mapping provided the basis for the ever more spectacular cartographic displays of RGS meetings, simultaneously celebrating the advancement of knowledge and British power (Jones 2005). From the early 1870s, music hall repertoire celebrated British power and imperial expansion; initially in a European but by the early 1880s in an overtly imperial context: an enthusiasm coloured by more strident tones of racial superiority.

Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* (1868) marked a shift to a more unequivocal advocacy of a British imperial mission to colonise and civilise inferior races, whose social Darwinian undertones were echoed in Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) and Bagehot's *Physics and Politics* (1872) (Claeys 2000, Hyam 1976). By the 1870s colonial censuses used strict racial classifications. Public school ideals of 'godliness and good learning' were being rapidly displaced in the 1860s by the cult of games and manliness. The evangelical imperialism of R. M. Ballantyne was being eclipsed by the more bombastic and militaristic adventurism of Henty's imperial romances, a staple of Sunday school prize volumes (see Kennedy's essay in this volume).

Looking back in December 1867, *The Economist* noted that 'Except towards the end of 1867, foreign politics have given but little trouble' (Anon. 1867). At that point tensions between France and Germany appeared to have subsided. By 1871 the picture was very different. To the puzzlement of contemporaries, the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 greatly complicated British international relations. Despite the shock of Prussia's victory, registered in the popularity of G. T. Chesney's 'The Battle of Dorking', first published in 1871, successive governments continued to follow the established tenets of British policy: detachment, a European concert and the Ottoman bulwark against Russia. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reinforced the significance of the Middle East for British imperial policy, just as the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 set British policy in the Cape on a more aggressive path. But the transition of the concert from a club of monarchies into collectives of representative governments significantly altered the terrain, and the Congress of Berlin of 1876 showed that managing the system required much more active intervention than had hitherto been tolerated. During the 1870s Britain's traditional support of Turkey was made more difficult across the political spectrum by dismay at the Sultan's policies towards Christian communities in the Balkans. Disraeli's purchase of Suez canal shares in 1876 drew Britain further into the internal affairs of Egypt, and of its hinterland. Only with the collapse of the Khedivate in Egypt did the conditions allowing for the Palmerstonian 'imperialism of free trade' finally collapse, along with the instinctive British alignment with Turkey. The fallout from the effective takeover of Egypt in 1882 compromised Britain in Europe, driving a wedge into relations with France, and making her increasingly reliant on the goodwill of Germany, for which Bismarck extracted full recompense. By the mid 1880s, from a position as undeniably the strongest European power in the 1870s, Britain had declined to perhaps the weakest. For the rest of the century, the strategic insecurity created by the increasing naval demands of British interests in the Eastern Mediterranean placed Britain at the mercy of German diplomacy.

The economic context was also shifting. London's position as the dominant global capital market was reinforced by the post-1871 eclipse of Paris, and the arrival in London of many European financiers. Although the full extent of the change was not immediately apparent to contemporaries, with hindsight it is clear that the early 1870s also marked a turning point in economic conditions. In the wake of the publication of W. S. Jevons' *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871), the 1870s saw a widespread crisis in confidence in orthodox political economy, prompted both by reformers and political economists themselves, underpinned by the narrowing of the marginalist revolution that rejected the labour theory of value

and instead advocated a model of value derived from taste, demand and price (Poovey 2008). The perception grew that Britain was losing technological leadership and beginning to lag behind competitors. Heavy industry lost its dynamism. In coal mining, output per man peaked 1879–83. In the 1870s and 1880s Britain became part of a global agrarian system: first American wheat, and then chilled and frozen meat. In the 20 years after 1873 heavy soil arable areas of Britain once again suffered badly from cheap foreign imports. But these areas were not generally typical. Other areas and livestock farming continued to be prosperous and expansive. Nevertheless, by the end of the *entr'acte* land was beginning to lose its social and cultural consequence. The Settled Land Act of 1882 'marked a major symbolic turning point in the transformation of landownership into simply another form of business enterprise' (Harris 1993: 105).

Britain retained its dominance in shipping longer than in any other sector. British yards built more than four-fifths of the total world tonnage launched in 1882. The traditional picture of a late-Victorian 'depression' has been successfully exploded. Although conditions became more difficult, industrial growth remained relatively constant, varying around 2 per cent per year from 1873 to 1913. Critics were aware, despite economic anxieties, of substantial increases in general spending power: from 1861 to 1881 average real wages rose by 37 per cent, and between 1881 and 1891 by a further 19 per cent (Boyer 2004). From the mid 1870s there was a slow down in the increase in the values of exports and imports. Britain's European rivals were shifting rapidly towards protectionism, and in 1881 calls for protectionism, in the guise of 'fair trade', were once more being made. At the same time little if any interest was shown before 1883 in issues of poverty. There is evidence of a steady increase in nutritional levels from the 1860s to the First World War (Floud *et al.* 1990). The abolition of sugar duties in 1874 allowed workers to have jam today as well as tomorrow, and by the 1870s the ability to save money had become a feature of working-class life, underpinning a steady transformation in recreation.

In Ireland the later 1860s and 1870s were a watershed leading to a much more anti-British nationalism (Gray 2004). In the wake of the 1867 Fenian outrages, the Irish question obtained a centrality in British politics it had not achieved since the later 1840s, not least because of its crucial role in ensuring the coherence of the Gladstonian Liberal Party. Gladstone famously announced in 1868 that 'my mission is to pacify Ireland'. Between 1867 and 1886 the emphasis was on remedial reforms, designed to meet the grievances of Irish Catholics. Unfortunately neither the Gladstonian initiatives of the early 1870s (disestablishment of the Irish Church, the 1870 Irish Land Act) or of the early 1880s (a further Land Act alongside a Coercion Act) dulled the growing demands for home rule. By the early 1880s, the dilemmas of Irish policy were intensifying tensions within Liberalism, and the election in 1885 of 86 Irish Nationalist MPs brought the tensions to a head, contributing to the Victorians' third transitional moment.

THE LATE-VICTORIAN PERIOD

The middle years of the 1880s offer a more credible moment of watershed for the Victorian period than perhaps any other. Harold Perkin has talked of the 'geological shift of the 1880s', and it has been an interpretative commonplace that the years

from the early 1880s are in crucial respects 'post-Victorian' (Perkin 1989: 48). Contemporaries registered a sense of strain and dislocation that seemed more fundamental than previous observations of change, perhaps most vividly exemplified by the profound disillusion of Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After'. This sense of crisis had a number of causes. Economic difficulties appeared to be intensifying, and 1884–87 were particularly troubled years. The 'discovery' of the East End of London problem (not least via Andrew Mearns's *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* [1883]) revived early Victorian fears that modern urban society was creating structures of living that threatened social stability, that revolutionary forces might be at work 'irreconcilably, subversively, beneath the vast smug surface' as Henry James put it (quoted in Lucas 1971: 177). In 1885 a Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry was set to work. Pressure on agriculture continued to intensify. Lord Heneage noted that 'landowners are in such a panic that they are letting at any price and giving 30 and 40 percent reductions' (quoted in Perkin 1989: 66). Class conflict appeared to be a coming force: 'If classes are not in actual conflict, they are at least watching each other with vigilant distrust' noted Salisbury in 1883 (quoted in Shannon 1996: 51). Fenian violence reached England again: between 1883 and 1885 the Local Government Offices were blown up, and two underground stations, Victoria Station and even Scotland Yard and the Tower of London were attacked. In February 1886 there were riots in Trafalgar Square. A substantial influx of Eastern European Jews in 1886 caused an exposé of the sweated trades of the capital, anxieties reinforced and focused by the furore surrounding the publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885 of 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', articles about child prostitution. W. H. Mallock's *The Old Order Changeth*, George Gissing's *Demos*, Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*, all published in 1886, reflected various anxieties about social upheaval. Richard Jefferies, *After London: or Wild England* (1885) ushered in a period of increasing popularity for dystopian views, yet in 1886 over 5 million celebrated empire at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The Berlin Conference (1884–85) reconstituted the terms of imperial engagement, as did, in the case of Africa, the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand reef in 1886, and the aftermath of the massacre of General Gordon's expedition to Khartoum.

In these contexts, the significant expansions of the political nation engineered by the century's third general adjustment of the political system took on a greater significance. The 1883 Political Corruption Act, with its rigid controls on election expenses, in some respects marked an even more significant watershed in the traditional politics of influence than the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872. The 1884 Reform Act extended the 1867 borough franchise to the counties, creating uniform voting qualifications for the first time. Finally, the 1885 Redistribution Act created a new map of single-member constituencies, belatedly giving the cities something like their full electoral due, while still maintaining the traditional principle of the distinction of urban and rural constituencies. In the wake of such changes, the progressives hoped for much. For Chamberlain 'The centre of power has been shifted, and the old order is giving place to the new' (quoted in Shannon 1974: 185). But while the settlement might have paved the way for the final break-up of aristocratic hegemony – the parliament of 1880–85 was the last in which the land

clearly held sway (although aristocratic dominance of the Cabinet persisted to 1905) – the contours of the political nation were unsettled rather than overthrown. Even though the reforms of 1884–85 increased the electorate by 80 per cent, accompanied by claims of ‘democracy’, they did not bring the vote even to all adult males. Indeed, by 1891 only about three of every five adult males (62.2 per cent) had the vote in England and Wales, 56 per cent in Scotland and 58.3 per cent in Ireland. There was still no vote for resident domestic servants, sons living with fathers, paupers, all those who moved frequently, and in practice (given the £10 threshold), outside London, for lodgers. All in all there was a significant shift towards mass politics, but also a reinforcement of elements of the Victorian system: the multiple franchises, the vital importance of registration, the sense of the vote as a privilege and not a right. By creating single-member constituencies the 1885 Redistribution Act brought to an end longstanding traditions of cross-party voting, put the localism of parliamentary politics under serious pressure and muted the political voice of the great provincial centres, but also created fairly homogenous working-class constituencies for the first time. Even so, constituencies were still very much autonomous republics, especially at election time. MPs were still representatives of their communities in parliament rather than their party in the provinces.

In this context what made the Reform Act for John Morley ‘one of the cardinal landmarks in our history’ (quoted by Jones 1972: 18), was that by precipitating the division over self-government for Ireland, it served as the lever of the more fundamental changes visible in the 1880s which emerged out of the remarkably sudden break up of the Gladstonian Liberal Party in 1886 in response to Gladstone’s advocacy of ‘Home Rule’. The Liberal split occurred paradoxically at a time when party disciplines were being consolidated, and was very much a function of the specific contingencies of 1886 (Harvie 1976). Local and regional associations were becoming more formal and regular. The Conservatives led the way from the later 1880s with the development of the ‘Middleton Machine’, a network of agents that supplemented the reorganised National Union of Conservative Associations and its nine provincial unions, and the Liberals followed suit, shifting from the NLF to more official bodies. As party discipline undercut the freedom of manoeuvre of individual MPs, and the local communities on which it had been based began to erode, so the politics of pressure was gradually eclipsed. At the same time, the Nonconformist conscience, which had been so much its motor, began to crumble in the face of the removal of its remaining central grievances (the 1888 Affirmation Act and the 1891 Religious Disabilities Removals Act), reorientations in theology and new approaches to social problems.

The years from 1886 were experienced by contemporaries as a period of rapid readjustment: the hollowing out and often overthrow of established patterns. As Britain moved into the 1890s, anxieties that have often been associated with a ‘fin de siècle’ mentality grew. The challenge of labour, the Decadent movement, the extension and intensification of imperial rivalries and the fiscal strain that they produced, the emergence of the ‘new journalism’ and the overthrow of longstanding cultural forms and practices, all heralded the apparent end of an era. Looking back even from the post-Great War vantage point of 1919, for James Bryce ‘living in a new world’, ‘the change seems to me to have come almost entirely in the fifteen years between 1885 and 1900’ (quoted in Harvie 1976: 218).

The dissolution of the once cohesive culture of Nonconformity was a reflection of the constant intellectual work of redefinition that marked the 1890s. A new generation of Liberal intellectuals, Hobhouse, Masterman, Hammond and Hobson, continued the move away from the simple, largely negative, mid-Victorian understanding of liberty as the absence of constraint. While retaining distance from socialism, in whose financial doctrines Liberals continued to see a recipe for indolence and pauperism, they cajoled the Liberals towards a doctrine of citizenship that shifted attention away from the exercise of freedom and towards the creation of the circumstances in which freedom could be exercised, a shift that involved greater state intervention than mid-Victorian liberalism had been comfortable with. By this time Nonconformist religious thought had created a new view of the state, more positive in its belief in the potential of government action. There was a greater acceptance of the function of taxation as means of redistribution, and hence an instrument of social policy. The need for redistributive fiscal policies was widely accepted between the introduction of Death Duties in 1894 and 1902. The problem was that Liberalism as a party remained a party of liberty and liberties: it never reconciled itself to becoming a party of state action. Even setting aside the continuing readiness of the House of Lords to demonstrate its ability to hobble the will of the elected government (as it did with Gladstone's Irish policy), Liberalism offered little, as the dismal record of the 1892–95 government indicated.

This lack of action bore little relation to the urgency of the task, although it was perhaps a reflection of a growing tendency, visible in the Jubilee celebrations of 1887, for the political classes to console themselves with the progress that seemed to have been made since the accession of Victoria, rather than to spur themselves with the scale and urgency of the task in hand. Booth's mammoth survey of social conditions in London, begun in 1886 and published in 17 volumes from 1889 to 1903, uncovered the extent of urban poverty, offering a scientific veneer to an impressionistic method standard since the 1830s (Walkowitz 1992). In the early 1880s there was still no piped water in a quarter of all the local authorities in England and Wales, and many houses in the poorer districts continued to rely on communal taps. The late Victorian city remained an unhealthy place. Deaths from infant diarrhoea were increasing steadily in the final years of the period and only declined sharply after 1900. It was not until then (perhaps 1918) that inhabitants could generally expect a reliable water supply, effective sewage disposal, and paved and sewered streets. Not that there weren't some improvements, particularly in general standards of living. By the 1890s it is possible to see significant enhancements in working-class diets. Victorian morbidity patterns dissolved as a number of characteristic Victorian diseases began to recede. Typhus was in rapid retreat from the late 1870s and had all but disappeared by 1900. 'By 1900 the old concerns of disease control and sanitary reform were well on the way to being replaced by new scientific and domestic preoccupations, by bacteriological monitoring and maternal and child welfare' (Hardy 1993: 8). At the same time the modern water closet, with single-piece basin and trap, was finally designed in a sufficiently cheap and reliable form to encourage its widespread introduction.

From the later 1880s social problems became a political issue. The strike of the Bryant and May 'match girls' in 1888, followed by strikes by gas and dock workers

in 1889, provided the spark for a brief but significant surge in union membership as the ‘new unionism’ of unskilled and semi-skilled workers caught alight. The surge of new unionism proved largely temporary, its significance primarily symbolic, ‘representing the emergence of the idea but not the reality of articulate mass consciousness’ (Shannon 1974: 221). Nevertheless the 1890s did see significant adjustments to the Victorian pattern of labour relations, a shift to sectoral agreements between employers’ organisations and unions, the spread of employers’ organisations, and new national agreements both on procedures and on wages. These years also saw the re-emergence of independent Labour politics, extending the socialist movement begun in the 1880s, and beginning to cohere into a genuine movement, not just a matter of political action, but of Labour churches, Clarion clubs and working-class associations. The election of Keir Hardie in West Ham in 1892 and the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893 might have marked a decisive challenge to longstanding traditions of Lib-Labism, but what is really striking about the pre-1900 period is the continued political weakness of independent labour. The socialist parties were noisy but numerically insignificant. The failure of the ILP to win any seats in 1895 confirmed its impotence: the future of labour politics was to be in the different guise of the Labour Representation Committee after 1900.

Labour activism and socialist agitation both drew strength from the deepening sense of economic depression. It is clear that Britain was losing its price competitiveness steadily during the 1880s and 1890s, with a particularly sharp decline in the early 1890s (Magee 2004: 83). The growth of manufactured exports was falling well behind that of Britain’s competitors. In 1886 America moved ahead in steel, and in 1890 in pig iron, followed by Germany in 1893 and 1904 (although it is only really after 1895 that the British share of world iron and steel exports shrinks rapidly). The 1901 census for the first time indicated an absolute fall in employment in textiles, creating pessimistic contemporary comment. Yet, despite the re-emergence of protectionist sentiment, free trade remained a ‘fetish’, as Trentmann has it, through the 1890s. The economic troubles of the 1880s and the revised labour relations of the 1890s both reflected a shift to a new phase of economic growth, based around a ‘second industrial revolution’, in which the heavy industrial staples characteristic of the Victorian economy were superseded by light engineering and consumer goods. There was a visible shift to ‘modern’ mass production, characterised by standardised and interchangeable components, national and international markets, and large-scale industrial organisations. The 1890s, like the 1840s, saw technological change and renewed skilled labour substitution, prompting industrial conflict in engineering. This was especially apparent in the rapidly spreading bicycle industry, assembling increasingly standardised components, and in the boot and shoe industry, which switched rapidly to mass production machinery in the 1890s. At the same time there is evidence of a loss of leadership in technological innovation after 1890, and a lack of dynamism in the British economy particularly visible in emerging industrial sectors. The late-Victorian move towards consolidation, peaking between 1894 and 1903 when more than 1,000 companies worth over £70 million disappeared in mergers, was one response (Magee 2004: 80). The practice of limited liability was widely embraced, in

brewing, cycling and confectionery, for example. From 1885 to 1907 the number of British manufacturing and distribution companies quoted on the London stock exchange rose from 60 to nearly 600 (Hannah 1976: 20).

There was a similar, if less concentrated, transformation of retailing. One of its crucial elements was the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which had been growing steadily from the 1870s, and was clearly a triumph of a very Victorian vision of moral retailing. From the 1880s a more commercial and middle-class evolution occurred, typified by the opening of the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street, Westminster, built in 1887, the extension of Harrods (initially a grocery store), and the Oxford Street stores of Marshall and Snelgrove, Peter Robinson and John Lewis. Across the country the multiples like Boots (established in 1877, expanding rapidly in the later 1880s and 1890s), and Home and Colonial (established in 1885, with 200 stores by 1895) were reshaping the experience of shopping. By the 1890s it was clear that the commodity culture of Victorian Britain was shifting towards a culture of mass consumption, characterised, amongst other things, by mass manufacture, geographical extensions of the market and rationalisation of the organisation of production (see Freedgood's essay in this volume).

The intrusion of the multiples into established landscapes of local shopping was emblematic of a wider erosion of local distinctiveness and autonomy, especially visible in the substantial shift in the terms of the relationship between central and local government towards the former. The 1890s saw an expansion of central government bureaucracy, Labour Department of the Board of Trade (1893), Board of Agriculture (1894), Board of Education (1899). Local government came under increasing pressure. The Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894, which finally marginalised parish vestries and justices of the peace in rural government, were seen as a means of strengthening local administration and providing a means for channelling social provision through the localities. But the costs of local government were outstripping increases in total rateable value. The rate in the pound was forced up, and this put heavy pressure on landlords and shopkeepers, and intensified resistance to expanding municipal action. Before 1900 this pressure was largely deflected by the use of profits from municipal trading to subsidise rates. Trades unions like the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which in 1871 had been a loose federation of self-help societies, was by the 1900s a robust organiser of national strikes, 'a classic example' according to Alborn, of a 'drive for national unions' (Alborn 1998: 245).

The years after 1885 brought an intensification of the revolt against Victorian cultural orthodoxies that had been emerging after 1867. One index of this was the accelerated output of Walter Pater, and even more the weight of writing about him after his death in July 1894. The 1890s were characterised by a visible embrace of the 'new'. Tendencies with roots back into the century suddenly seem to accelerate and coalesce. One sign was the growing sense of the anachronism of Victorian publishing structures. New specialist periodicals appeared to challenge the generalist monthlies, including the *Law Quarterly Review* (1884), *English Historical Review* (1886), *Classical Review* (1887) (Collini 1991: 213). Literary agents quickly established themselves and royalty payment rapidly replaced fixed price copyright sales. The introduction of linotype and monotype systems in the late 1880s and early 1890s opened up new possibilities for cheap print. Overseas

syndication expanded in the wake of the conclusion of international copyright agreements (such as the Berne Convention of 1887 and the US Chace Act 1891). The success of Macmillan's Colonial Library series in 1886 highlighted the growing importance of colonial markets. There was an 'enormous expansion' in popular magazines of miscellaneous journalism (Eliot 1994: 83). A transitional generation of 'popular' novelists appeared, including Rider Haggard, Hall Caine, Marie Corelli and R.D. Blackmore, who achieved unprecedented sales, but whose popularity rarely survived into the period after 1918. Rider Haggard was perhaps the country's best paid writer in the wake of *She* (1887), earning £10,000 a year (Waller 2006: 12). With a literary market dominated by Caine and Corelli, the 1890s were more suburban than subversive; it was the mass market and not modernism that seemed the more powerful challenge to established orthodoxies.

Bernard Porter has suggested that the position of these years on the cusp of an epochal change is revealed by a recognition of flux and possibility that gave almost all shades of opinion cause for some optimism about the future (Porter 1994). It was clear, for example, that by the 1890s the always contested patterns of Victorian gender had become decisively unstable. Tosh talks about 'the public undermining of private patriarchy during the 1880s and 1890s' (and of the 'characteristically Victorian culture of domesticity entering a new phase') (Tosh 1999: 146). The identification of the 'new woman' question in 1894 brought to a head tensions that had been emerging in the previous ten years, and generated fierce debate. Long-standing gender stereotypes were successfully challenged. Motherhood lost its status as a natural feminine capacity, and its ability to underpin feminine authority: it became a skill to be taught by experts. Victorian inhibitions began to crumble. The career of the Ladies Guides Association, established in 1888 to open up the West End to unchaperoned women, which folded in 1902 on the basis that its services were no longer really required, points to the chronological bounds of this transition. The New Women novels of the 1890s, with their essentially Victorian conventions, gave way to the 'sex novels' of the mid-Edwardian years. But as early as 1893 the huge sales of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* demonstrated the weakened force of Victorian reticence. One of the most corrosive forces at work in this period was the bicycle. The Cyclists' Touring Club, formed in 1878, already had 21,000 members by 1886, by which time there were at least 800 clubs in the UK. But it was the development of the modern 'safety bicycle', and then the invention of the pneumatic tyre in the mid 1880s, followed by a rapid decline in production costs during the 1890s, that created the bicycle boom. By the mid 1890s there were perhaps 500 bicycle manufacturers in Britain, producing c.500,000 cycles a year. Grant Allen's *Typewriter Girl* (1897), who flees from office tedium to the freedom of an anarchist commune in Horsham by cycle, captures the unprecedented personal freedom offered by the cycle. It was easy for old Victorians like Frederic Harrison to note 'a gradual lowering of the moral tone' in the years before 1901, 'an abandonment of the higher standard of public opinion' (Harrison 1901: 4).

Care is needed here. Much of what early interpreters of the 1890s as a decade of radical change (like Holbrook Jackson, whose *The 1890s* was published in 1913), saw as markers of the new temper was confined to a narrow and indeed self-consciously *avant garde* elite, which defined itself in opposition to the dominant

tendencies of the period, and was reminded forcibly by the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde in 1895 and the eclipse of Aubrey Beardsley of its marginal status. The grip of orthodoxy slackened, but it did not let go. In art, rather than repudiating the realist impulse, the naturalism of the 1880s merely 'set higher standards of authenticity' (McConkey 2002: 133). Hence the vogue of Bastien-Lepage and French realist painting in the 1880s, and its influence within the Newlyn and Glasgow schools. Hence the survival, indeed revival, of the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite painters visible in the work of artists such as John William Waterhouse, John Liston and Frank Cadogan Cooper as well as in the formation of arts and crafts societies in London and the provinces. Likewise, as Kate Newey's study of 'Theatricality' shows, on the stage the conventions of spectacle, though given an imperial twist, survived generally unscathed. By the end of the 1890s there was a growing sense that the conventions of Victorian art produced only banality, in contrast to the ability of French impressionists such as Monet to 'see with fresh eyes' (Frederick Wedmore, quoted by Taylor 1999: 134). The double revolution of cheap mass-produced halftones, which could be printed on an ordinary letter-set press, and the instant camera robbed photography of what Benjamin described as its 'aura'. In 1880 there were only 14 photography clubs in Britain; by 1905 it was estimated that there were four million amateur photographers (Booth 1981: 14). This forced artists back to the 'autographic', personal interpretation, and new ways of representation that went beyond merely replication. This sort of shift was hinted in the success of Whistler's 1892 'Nocturnes, Marines and Chevalet Pieces' exhibition at the Goupil Gallery. By 1893 the new critics at least had, as the *Studio* put it, 'closed their Ruskins for ever' (Gillett 1990: 67). There was an ebbing away of social purpose, and in the novels of the 1890s life becomes a spectacle incapable of providing lessons.

Institutionally, religion went into retreat from the 1890s. Even organised secularism lost its impetus. During the 1890s the decline of religion was only relative to population, and such evidence of decline as there was could be treated as a temporary blip. After 1901 the decline in numbers became absolute, and it was recognised that this was a secular trend. By the mid 1890s declining ordination rates had made it clear within Anglicanism that its longstanding aim of expanding the clergy in pace with the population could not be sustained. The missionary impulse of the churches was visibly weakening. The Methodist Central Halls of the 1880s and 1890s marked the last concerted effort to reach the unchurched urban masses. During the 1890s it is possible finally to see a more general recognition of the significance of Biblical criticism, widespread discussion, even incorporation in the curricula of the theological colleges. In the wake of texts such as Charles Gore's *Lux Mundi* (1889) and A. M. Fairbairn's *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (1893) acceptance of elements of the 'higher criticism' finally spread across Nonconformity. There was no eclipse of philanthropy, but certainly a decisive weakening of its moralistic diagnosis of social ills. The Charity Organisation Society, with its emphasis on thrift and self-reliance, was increasingly isolated and visibly outmoded. In social policy redemption gave way to recovery. The state was no longer morally suspect. Structural reform by statute replaced familial intervention by volunteer.

There are signs of shifts of cultural mood, reflecting a number of national reverses during the decade, the intense depression of 1892–93, diplomatic travails and the apparent paralysis of party government. Heightened anxieties registered in the rash of invasion novels like William Le Quex's *The Great War in England in 1897* (1893) and Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1898). The language of degeneration became suddenly fashionable, reflecting a sort of (as John Tosh puts it) 'catch-all for pessimism about the birthrate, the nation's physical fitness, its mental and moral health, and its cultural vigour' (Tosh 2005: 195). During the 1890s in particular, European nationalism, imperial anxieties and scientific discoveries increased doubts about the inevitability of 'progress'. Huxley's 1893 Romanes Lecture, 'Evolution and Ethics' decisively repudiated attempts to create analogic relations between evolution in the natural world and ethical progress. The anti-progressivist implications of Darwin's theories of random selection seemed finally to be undercutting traditional Victorian optimism and system building. Wells's *The Time Machine*, with its forebodings about the extinction of mankind, also registers a more widespread rejection of the Victorian confidence in progress. Victorian investments in history depreciated on all sides. Medievalism was in full retreat by the 1890s. Efficiency trumped tradition. For Liberal commentator C. F. G. Masterman, 'the present can never take refuge behind the past' (Masterman 1901: v).

The late-Victorian period finally produced an imaginatively integrated and coherent empire for the first time. Military modes and metaphors became more common from the 1880s, even within religious circles (Boys' Brigade [1883] and the Church Lads' Brigade [1891]). In the 1890s membership of the officer corps became *de rigueur* at the public schools. The imperialist adventure yarn of G. A. Henty, the romances of Haggard and Stevenson, were championed by critics like Lang and magazines like *Longman's*. This was the golden age of the war correspondent and the war artist (Springhall 1986). In the wake of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, Victorian exhibition culture went imperial (including the Stanley and Africa Exhibition and the 'Greater Britain' exhibition of 1899). Private funds poured in to meet the cost of the Imperial Institute, established in 1887 and for a while an effective focus for campaigns for imperial federation. (Private funds could not sustain it, and it was taken into public control in 1902.) What Hobson described as the 'spectatorial lust' of late-Victorian popular imperialism (quoted in Coombes 1994: 63) – visible in the missionary exhibitions, which often like the 1890 Stanley Exhibition adopted the 'trophy' style, in which objects were presented less as artefacts in themselves and more as celebrations of conquest and acquisition – became increasingly popular. James Belich notes that in the 1880s and 1890s more than 50 voluntary associations emerged to encourage emigration to the white colonies (Belich 2009).

The year 1885 also marked the final effort to restore the 'concert system' in Europe. Initially Salisbury's diagnosis was fundamentally traditional. He believed that isolation, if it could be maintained without serious naval challenge, was infinitely to be preferred to entanglements likely to be the response to any attempt at assertion; and he had little confidence in an imperial counterweight to Britain's European decline. But from 1884 or 1885 British policy was increasingly pre-occupied with the threat of a new anti-British alignment of continental powers,

which would constitute a significant threat to British naval superiority, a pre-occupation that engendered almost perpetual ‘naval scares’ and the naval arms race (Beeler 1997), and also the more active embrace of empire as a necessary prop to Britain’s great power claims. The Berlin Conference demonstrated the intensified threat of imperial expansion in Africa and the Pacific from France and Germany, and pushed Britain into preventative annexations that quickly eroded the distinction between colonies and protectorates. An Empire of pre-emption was added to the existing commercial and settler empires. As indigenous regimes were destabilised by greater levels of European penetration, increasing resort was demanded both to the creation of new protectorates and to the use of new chartered companies, such as Rhodes’ British South Africa Company. Although attitudes to empire within government circles remained essentially unchanged, the foreign policy of all governments in the 1890s bowed reluctantly to the apparently inexorable logic of expansion in central Africa as a bulwark to Egypt. In South Africa tensions between the Cape and Kruger’s South African Republic, inflamed by conflicts over gold exploitation, produced a steady deterioration of relations that brought war in 1899. By the 1890s imperial control was steadily being extended to include law courts, policing and taxation. In Ireland the successes of the Home Rule Movement brought a new phase of sectarian polarisation, and made a consensual solution for the Irish question even more distant.

THE END OF THE VICTORIAN

As we saw at the outset of this chapter, the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 unleashed a torrent of almost apocalyptic nostalgia. Watching the queen’s cortege, Elinor Glyn felt ‘that I was witnessing the funeral procession of England’s greatness and glory’ (quoted in Hynes 1968: 17). Otherwise, as had been the case in 1837, it was the death of the monarch almost alone that gave 1901 its distinction. Apart from this, the imperial tour of Edward VII, and the continuation of the Boer War, ‘there has been little to lead us to suppose’, remarked *The Times*, ‘that future historians will concern themselves very greatly with the year 1901’ (Anon 1901: 7). Changes in electoral rules meant that, unlike in 1837, there was not even an automatic dissolution of parliament on the death of the monarch to enliven events. Even so, the cultural significance of the death of the Queen in 1901, and hence the appropriateness of this as dating the end of a historical period stretching from the 1830s, was magnified through its conjunction with a number of other events. In Arthur Ransome’s slightly telescoped recollections, ‘The sudden lurch forward in history that jerked us from the age that remembered the Duke of Wellington into the modern world’ could be dated ‘by the death of the Queen, the Jameson Raid, Mafeking Night and the sight of two Rugby masters standing on the steps of the school gateway and looking together at an early copy of the *Daily Mail*’ (Ransome 1976: 61).

Ransome was not alone in identifying the Boer War as both the occasion and in no small measure the cause of the changes occurring in the years around the death of Victoria. Although scholarly attention has inevitably focused on the 1914–18 war as the moment when for Europe as a whole the nineteenth century came to an end, for Britain, except perhaps for matters economic, the Boer War

deserves perhaps equal attention. The conservative journalist L. J. Maxse had no doubt that ‘the South African War opened a new epoch in our history’ (quoted in Green 1999: 361). The strains being created by the mounting costs of naval expenditure and imperial defence were apparent in the 1890s, but the Boer War brought them to a head. For many the wild celebrations of the relief of Mafeking lifted the lid on the seething cauldron of democracy, and demonstrated that the era of rational politics was passing. The war crystallised a sense that continental tensions, particularly the ambitions of Germany, were once again a fundamental threat to Britain’s world position, prompting the ending of diplomatic ‘isolation’ and the stoking of the Anglo-German arms race (Steiner 1977). Above all, the war convinced many of the need for greater imperial solidarity, and demonstrated that the ‘blue water’ policy of imperial defence based on naval supremacy (which in one form or other had dominated Victorian strategic thinking) was incapable of defending Britain and its empire. In foreign affairs the years from 1898 to 1907 were recognised as constituting a ‘diplomatic revolution’ for Britain, even if the motives were conservative and temporising, and the results were the postponement until the First World War of more fundamental adjustments of British military organisation and strategic thinking. In the space of a couple of years from 1895, the buttressing of Turkey was abandoned. For all their limits the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902) and the subsequent *ententes* with France and Russia marked both a decisive abandonment of Victorian principles of the avoidance of encumbrances and a reorientation towards Europe and the threat of Germany in particular. The change was swift. In 1904 naval planning was still preoccupied with the threat from France; by 1906 it was accepted that the overwhelming likelihood was that Britain’s next war would be against Germany. The imperial conferences of 1897 and 1902, the confederation of Australia in 1901, and the formation in 1904 of the Committee of Imperial Defence demonstrate a new concern with imperial defence. These developments fed on the intensification of late-Victorian popular imperial cultures, the jingoism of the music hall (‘Britannia’s Sons shall rule the world’ [1897]), and the overt imperialism of the new middlebrow press (as in the *Daily Mail*’s [1896] designation of itself as ‘independent and imperial’ in politics). The years around 1900 saw a rush of new imperialist associations, and a flurry of imperial composition, most enduringly Elgar’s ‘Imperial March’ (1897) and ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ (1901). Against these can be set the Proclamation of the Pan-African Conference that met in London in 1900, written by W. E. B. Du Bois, which predicted that ‘The Problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour line’ (Schneer 1999: 221; for a discussion of varieties of African Victorianism see Gikandi in this volume).

The travails of British military operations and the controversy over the policy of internment in concentration camps of the subjected Boers contributed to an acute sense of disillusionment. But it was more than just a question of mood. Differences of opinion over the justice of the war further widened the cracks in the Nonconformist base of Liberalism that had been appearing since 1886. The 1900 ‘Khaki’ election, won easily by the Conservatives, marked a significant stage in the intrusion of party machinery into the conduct of electoral politics, as candidates’ addresses and electioneering materials became increasingly stereotyped. The war cost more than all Britain’s other nineteenth-century imperial adventures

put together, and the fiscal system of the mid-Victorians finally crumbled. 'Peace and Retrenchment are nowadays looked upon rather as dreams than realities . . . it is certain that we must be ready to defend our Empire and hold our Trade . . .', warned the *Bankers' Journal* in March 1900 (quoted in Schneer 1999: 89). Legacies of fiscal strain and anxiety about the state of the nation's defences in the light of evidence of the poor health of potential recruits prompted a rhetoric of 'national efficiency' that breached traditional Victorian limits to state intervention. By 1902 central government expenditure was twice the level of 1894, and continued to increase thereafter, absorbing an ever greater share of GNP.

By convincing Chamberlain and many others that imperial organisation was both essential and practicable, the war also paved the way for the Unionist bid for 'fair trade' protectionism, which above all else shaped the politics of the Edwardian period. Significant stirrings against free-trade orthodoxy are visible from the 1870s and 1880s, but if by the early 1890s free trade was a movement in retreat, it was still the best available, and the Conservatives held back from repudiating the free trade consensus until after the retirement of Salisbury. Chamberlain's dramatic resignation in 1903 shattered the consensus. Although free trade was overwhelmingly endorsed in the 1906 election, a number of crucial shifts around 1900 – both moves towards support for a more aggressive free trade based firmly on reciprocity, and the breaching of Peelite orthodoxies in 1901 and 1902 when the Conservative government put tariffs on coal and corn – can be taken to mark the end of the unambiguous Victorian prosecution of free trade. These years also, finally, brought a critical disturbance in the pattern of Victorian politics in the parliamentary consequences for the labour vote that followed quickly on the formation in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee, and in the final working through of the split of the Liberal party produced by Gladstone's 'conversion' to Home Rule in 1886, and the flight of the propertied to the Conservatives, which, as Hoppen has noted, 'became emphatic only after 1905' (Hoppen 1998: 270). At the same time Victorian cultures of participative politics fell away rapidly. After 1900 it was increasingly difficult to sell political papers and there was a shakeout of the provincial press in which the political commitment and coverage of the Victorian years was destroyed (Koss 1981).

The significance of the war was magnified because it coincided with a phase of more general transformation. The Spanish War of 1898 announced the arrival of the United States as an imperial power with global ambitions. The Boxer crisis in China in 1900 brought a new instability to the Far East, and set up the 'grand dilemma of imperial strategy in the twentieth century: how to safeguard British interests simultaneously in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia' (Darwin 2009: 83). There are a number of processes that cannot be tied to a specific event or enactment of 1900/01, but which nevertheless appear to have experienced a period of rapid transformation of which these years were essentially the centre. This was true of technological innovations such as the internal combustion engine, synthetic dyes, pharmaceuticals, electricity, telephony and wireless, and new industries like the early car industry. To give just two examples, in the boot and shoe industry the decade after 1895 was one of rapid technological change. In heavy chemicals, the spread after 1895 of electrolysis in the production of chlorine and caustics further undermined an already obsolescent Leblanc process. The incorporation of

unions into structures of industrial management gathered pace. Overall, the number of conciliation and collective bargaining arrangements in Britain grew from 64 in 1894, to 162 in 1905 and 325 in 1913 (Gospel 1992: 81). According to an American consular report of 1906, ‘No one who has not lived in England during the last seven or eight years can realize how great has been the awakening here nor how changed the British mental attitude is regarding new ways of doing things’ (quoted in Saul 1960: 28).

The pressure that the expense of the Boer War placed on central funding also played a fundamental part in the 1902 Education Act, which overturned the 1870 settlement and indeed the whole Victorian system of central support for denominational education. The settlement of 1899–1904 (of which the 1902 Act was only the centrepiece) fundamentally reordered the contexts of Victorian education, transforming a system mainly run by the denominations to one run primarily by the state (albeit still with relatively low levels of central direction). The 1900 Code, with its provision of a block grant, had a liberating effect, and the curriculum escaped from its longstanding emphasis on the three Rs. Significantly, by establishing compulsory ratepayer funding for denominational schools, the 1902 Act also dismantled a taboo that had restricted the development of national education from its origins. The School Boards were replaced with local education authorities. The voluntary sector was squeezed even more tightly and in some places shrank by half in the years before 1914. In this, education was just one element of a more general shift in power from the civic-minded volunteer to the professional expert (Prochaska 2006). The neutrality of the state was once more in question, even before the reforms of the 1906–14 Liberal governments effected a shift from the regulatory to the provisionary state, tilting the balance of central–local expenditure decisively and permanently in favour of the centre. Aged Gladstonians, like Frederic Harrison, looked askance on a world that had ‘lost much of the higher spirit which inspired our public and private life not more than thirty years ago’, in which ‘[t]he reek of the pothouse, the music-hall, the turf, of the share-market, of the thieves’ fence infects our literature, our manners, our amusements and our ideals of life’ (quoted in Schneer 1999: 167).

Old Victorians like Harrison were also being forced to confront dramatic changes in their sense of the possible. Just as steam had changed the dimensions of the globe in the 1840s, so electricity and the internal combustion engine were reconstituting space in the 1900s. In 1901 Marconi demonstrated transatlantic transmission; and by 1902 radio was already shifting from a problem of science to a problem of engineering. The first commercial transatlantic transmissions were being sent by 1903. Though telephones appeared in the 1880s, they developed only very slowly in the final two decades of the Victorian period; but accelerated quickly thereafter, and by 1912 some 600,000 were in service (Kern 1983). The rapid development of moving picture technologies in the later 1890s and early 1900s created the new mass leisure cinema industry with dramatic speed. With the arrival of cinema and radio the hegemony of print, which had endured for several centuries, was undermined. The pace of change in transport was more measured, but its implications were no less profound, as contemporaries perceived. From the opening of London’s Central Line in 1900, the development of suburban rail services was accelerated by the introduction of electric trains. Local transport was further

reshaped by extending tram services and the rapid exploitation of motorised road transport in the provision of bus services. Britain's first production car, the Lanchester, appeared in 1896, the same year that the regulation that any car on the public roads needed to be preceded by a man walking on foot at a speed not over four mph was repealed. The (soon to be Royal) Automobile Club was formed in 1897. The Motor Act (1902) established longstanding principles of regulation, particularly the use of number plates. The tarmac processes, patented in 1902, offered the promise of smoother and more reliable road surfaces. Production accelerated rapidly. A 1904 order, which raised the maximum unladen weight to five tonnes, prompted a bus 'boom'. Behind the dramatic inventions, less visible but no less fundamental adjustments were taking place. The decision in 1902 of the *Daily Mail* to begin printing in Manchester, with the contents being telegraphed from London each night, marked the death knell of the Victorian balance of national and provincial presses.

In less than ten years the automobile took hold, quickening imaginations and creating a new sense of vision (see E. V. Lucas, *A Wanderer in London* [1906], cited in Daniels 1993: 31), contributing to what we can see as a shift in 'scopic regime', an eclipse or abandonment of Victorian modes and their replacement by new forms of observing, visualising and representing. Here again, a few instances will have to stand for the broader processes. In social policy, Seeborn Rowntree's seminal *Poverty. A Study of Town Life* (1901), offered a rejection of Victorian modes of observation and counting for new techniques of surveying, sampling and statistical analysis. There was a rapid shift in governmental investigation from the impressionism of the Royal Commission to the sustained investigation and data collection of the departmental committee. The research university was finally coming into its own, and by the end of the period, universities established a hegemony over the production of knowledge that was to last for much of the twentieth century. New institutions, such as the National Physics Laboratory (1900), and the conversion of the South Kensington institutions into Imperial College between 1903 and 1908, signified the shift to new models of science. Certainly developments in science at the turn of the century challenged materialism and empiricism, calling into question the meaningfulness of the visible. The discovery of x-rays by Röntgen in 1895, the development of x-ray photography, itself of course a technology of vision, the conceptualisation of radioactivity by Marie Curie in 1898, and then Rutherford's reconstruction in the early 1900s of the structure of the atom, together revolutionised the physics of matter, and showed that nature was not the neat orderly system that had underpinned Victorian conceptions of the world. Arthur Symonds's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) seems to mark a decisive turning away from the rationalism and literalism of the nineteenth century. 'The human race', Arthur Balfour commented, 'without exception had lived and died in a world of illusion until the last years of the century' (quoted in Bowler 1989: 200). All helped tilt the balance away from realist projects and towards modernism's assault on what Henry James came to see as 'the fatal futility of the Fact' (quoted in Jolly 1993: 202). In the 1890s confidence in the interpretability of the object, and the impulse to encyclopaedic exhibition, gave way to new strategies: selective exhibition carefully designed to point up didactic messages. Victorian commitments to abundance in display were increasingly

interpreted as excess, and there was a shift from the exhibition of things to displays of images of things (Yanni 1999). New ideals in home furnishing promoted an abandonment of Victorian domestic display and the creation of clean, clutter-free spaces.

The twentieth century also brought with it radically different time cultures, as is made abundantly clear, despite his efforts to argue the contrary, by Wyndham Lewis' *Time and Western Man* (1927). Pierre Curie's announcement in March 1903 that radium salts constantly release heat once more expanded the range of time. At the same time there were a number of challenges that called into question the absolute view of time itself that had dominated in the Victorian period, and the emergence of more relativistic notions. Einstein's proposition of the absolute constancy of the speed of light required the abandonment of the idea of absolute time; as time and space were identified as dependent phenomena, time became an aspect of space. These theories were complex and abstruse, and can hardly be said to have transformed everyday perceptions. But they did have a significant cultural echo, above all in the emerging literature of science fiction. Photography had challenged the transitoriness of time by allowing moments to be frozen and preserved; film and phonograph encouraged further destabilisation of the apparent fixities of time by appearing to transcend it, producing and reproducing not just instances but passages of time (Doane 2002). Faced with an intensification of the objectification of time (in the service of industry, for example), modernism privileged private experience over public measurement, its characters imposing themselves on time, demonstrating what one literary critic, in the context of the novels of Henry James, describes as the 'potential infinity of the individual psychological moment' (Raleigh 1968: 52). The place of history was changing. Literary 'modernism' laid claim to radicalism in part through a deliberately intemperate repudiation. For Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (quoted by Lodge 1979: 550). As the razzmatazz around the Alfred millenary and the sudden popularity of historical pageants demonstrated, history could still claim a prominent place in public life. But there was also a new fragmentation: a 'change in the contents and roles of history [which] crystallized around 1900' (Melman 2006: 327).

The weakening of the British economy, visible from the 1870s, accelerated markedly at the turn of the century, although the appearances of Victorian normality were largely sustained until the cataclysm of the First World War. The rapid adoption of the slogan of 'national efficiency', whose popularity can be traced to the publication of Sidney Webb's *A Policy of National Efficiency* in 1901, was one sign of the new sense of economic crisis. Britain's place in world trade changed quickly after 1900. The sharp increase in volume of world trade, largely via the expansion of other economies, meant a significant reduction in Britain's relative importance during the Edwardian period. For example, Britain provided 85 per cent of global coal exports in 1900, but only 50 per cent in 1913. Sterling was no longer unchallenged as the international currency of last resort; instead it was increasingly required to act as a pivot between the other major currencies, a role that it was clear was coming to be beyond its capacity. The shift away from the Victorian staples was ever more apparent, and the absence of technological dynamism was brought into focus by the lack of British contribution to the

technological developments of fields such as electrical engineering. Within the space of a few years the general unions, which had struggled for 30 years to retain a foothold, laid claim to a central position in a new structure of industrial relations. Just at the point at which cultures of consumption, not just in the further articulations of the department store but also in a more general transformation in the structure of retailing, were being transformed, Victorian preoccupations with thrift and saving were being challenged by increasing concern at the problems of underconsumptionism, articulated by J. M. Robertson's *The Fallacy of Saving* and J. A. Hobson's *The Social Problem. Life and Work* (1901). In a like manner, at the very moment that anxieties about the deterioration of the urban population reached a new pitch in the reactions to the unhealthiness of recruits during the Boer War, it is now clear that Britain was in the midst of a profound demographic change, in which the grip of Victorian mortality rates was finally loosened, not least because by 1900 the ebbing of the characteristic Victorian epidemiology was turning into a more general eradication.

CONCLUSION

The Victorian period was neither stable nor homogeneous, but neither absence disqualifies its claims to be understood as a period. I have argued elsewhere that the 1830s and the years around 1900 represent broad moments of transformation that, along with the coherencies and continuities of the intervening years, help to constitute the Victorian as a meaningful historical period (Hewitt 2006). Here I have attempted to take this argument a stage further by seeking to demonstrate that within this period, moments of heightened crisis and adjustment around 1848–51, 1867–70 and 1884–86 concentrated and modulated trajectories of change in the period, in doing so creating four coherent phases of the Victorian. At one level it would appear that these divisions are fundamentally driven by political agencies, not least the punctuation provided by the parliamentary resettlements of 1829–32, 1867 and 1884–85 (perhaps inevitably, given the power of these events to shape the narrative of Westminster-centred public life), and that they are also fundamentally metropolitan rather than periodisations of global history. Even so, it can be suggested that – partly fortuitously (as in the case of the Kimberley diamonds), partly because the sense of political crisis generated by the reform agitations prised open spaces for other processes of change, and even more because the coincidence of process and event created a field of force that drew together and drew into new relationships with each other diverse processes, domestic and international – these hinge periods constituted broader moments of historical change, both thematically and geographically.

Three of the periods so formed coincide relatively conveniently with long-standing constructions of early, mid and late Victorian. The fourth addresses the often deliberate imprecision that has marked the transition from mid-to-late Victorian, and in doing so challenges conventional nomenclatures. Given the long-standing purchase of the established labels, and their at least partial fit with the different chronology proposed here, there seems no reason to reject them entirely for alternative labels, either metonymic (perhaps the ‘ages’ of Peel, Palmerston, Gladstone and Salisbury) or thematic (perhaps the ‘ages’ of crisis, equipoise, strain

and climacteric). Instead, the proposal here is to retain the conventional tripartite labels, and merely to confine late-Victorian Britain more clearly to the post-1885 period. The designation of the period from the later 1860s to the mid 1880s as the Victorian ‘*entr’acte*’ may not, as is perhaps rightly the case with such suggestions, meet with general approval, but perhaps it will at least encourage renewed attention to the nature of the milestones of the Victorian years, and to the periods or sub-periods that they help to mark. At the same time, I hope the collection of essays presented here will contribute to ongoing debates about the chronologies of the Victorian period, its characteristic ways of living and of thinking, and the extent to which these are usefully considered not just in a national, but in a global context.

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PART I

THE WORLD ORDER

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CHAPTER TWO

THE GREAT ARCH OF EMPIRE



Dane Kennedy

‘British Empire Throughout the World Exhibited in One View’ is the title of Scottish cartographer John Bartholomew Jr’s well-known and widely reproduced map, first published in *The Royal Illustrated Atlas* in 1860. This world map highlights British imperial territories in pink or light red, by this time the standard hue for cartographic representations of the British Empire. Tables on the upper left and right sides of the map list the various colonies and other dependencies that comprised the empire, divided into five regions (Europe, America, Asia, Australia, and Africa). Cartouches run across the top and bottom of the map, representing some of the empire’s many subjects. The upper panel shows encounters between British traders and settlers and North and South American Indians. The lower panel presents a cavalcade of peoples whose dress and features identify them as South Asians, East Asians, Africans, and others. A middle-class English couple stands at the center of this cavalcade, flanked by a tartan-clad Scot and a Royal Hussar cavalry officer. The message communicated by Bartholomew’s map is clear: The British Empire is a collaborative enterprise of global dimensions, its multiple subjects bound together by the benefits of British rule.

Those benefits were expressed by most Victorians in the language of liberalism. They saw their empire as a cosmopolitan force that promoted free trade and free labour, safeguarded security and legal rights to persons and property, and served the broader purposes of prosperity, progress, and civilization. How did the Victorians reconcile their faith in liberalism and its benefits with the fact that their empire had been won by conquest and was for the most part ruled autocratically? This question has attracted a good deal of attention from scholars in recent years, some of whom have suggested that imperialism was the worm in the bud of liberalism (Mehta 1999; Pitts 2005; Dirks 2006; Mantena 2010). The Victorians themselves were acutely aware of the problem their empire posed for the liberal project, but they were equally insistent on the promises liberalism offered to the empire. They recognized that imperial power placed them at risk of moral and political corruption, as Edmund Burke had famously argued as prosecutor in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, the governor-general of India, in the late eighteenth century. They were hopeful, however, that liberalism’s humanitarian



Figure 2.1 *British Empire Throughout the World with Illustrated Peoples above & Below. 1850. © PARIS PIERCE/Alamy*

ideals and entrepreneurial energies could contain if not entirely eliminate these dangers, which they saw as emanating from the encounter with difference itself. The Victorians' engagement with empire consisted of a struggle between their faith in the family of man and a common future for humankind and their fears that primitive peoples and despotic powers would drag them down a darker path. Their ambition was to establish the empire as a great arch that could stretch across the chasm of difference and create a common weal.

* * *

The Victorians inherited an imperial dominion that had been several centuries in the making. Starting with a precarious foothold in the Caribbean and on the continent to the north in the early seventeenth century, Britain's empire assumed genuinely global dimensions by the late eighteenth century, encompassing an archipelago of highly profitable Caribbean sugar islands, a cluster of vibrant settler colonies that stretched across the entire eastern third of North America, an immensely profitable trade dominion on the Indian subcontinent, and a scattering of garrison islands across the seas. Although the successful rebellion by the

American colonists truncated the Atlantic portion of this empire, it expanded eastward as a result of the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1791–1814), consolidating its control of India and extending its reach into the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

The opportunistic, ad hoc, and incremental way in which this empire came into existence gave it a crazy-quilt administrative structure. The loss of the American colonies had led to the abolition of the Colonial Office, its remaining responsibilities being transferred to the Home Office and then the War Office, which was renamed the War and Colonial Office in 1801. A separate Colonial Office was only restored in 1854. Through its various permutations, the principle purview of this office was the crown colonies, which comprised only a portion of the empire. India, the ‘crown jewel’ of Victoria’s empire, was governed until 1858 by the East India Company, originally a joint-stock enterprise that had mutated into a governing body with its own army and navy, operating under the oversight of a Board of Control in London. Its sway extended from the subcontinent into the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. The Indian Mutiny/Rebellion of 1857–58 forced British authorities to abolish it and assume direct control, with the India Office serving as the mediating agency between the British Cabinet and the Indian Raj. The Foreign Office, in turn, had responsibility for the protectorates, those ostensibly self-governing states whose foreign relations were in fact controlled by Britain. Many of these states were small and weak, such as the sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf, but the Foreign Office also exerted considerable influence over China, the Ottoman Empire, and Latin American states like Argentina and Brazil, and after 1882 it oversaw the governance of Egypt. The Admiralty and War Office also exerted considerable independent influence over the shape and character of the empire.

From the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth century, the empire was what C.A. Bayly has termed a pro-consular despotism (Bayly 1989). It was autocratic, militaristic, and quick to crush dissent, which it invariably interpreted as sedition. British officials responded to the challenge posed by French revolutionary ideas by working to refurbish the reputations of the monarchy, hereditary elites, and the established church, associating them with patriotism, agrarian improvement, and moral order. Despite the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, slave labor remained an integral element of this empire, especially in the profitable sugar islands of the West Indies. Other forms of labor coercion thrived as well, including the impressment of sailors into the Royal Navy and the transportation of convicts to the Australian penal colonies.

By the late 1820s, however, the ground had begun to shift beneath the feet of the old regime. The first serious fissure opened up in Ireland, the main fault line between the metropolitan and colonial tectonic plates, where the campaign for Catholic emancipation breached one of the key bulwarks that had protected the traditional elites. Soon other shock waves followed, most notably the reform of Parliament in 1832 and the abolition of slavery in British colonial territories in 1834, followed in 1838 by the early suspension of the oppressive apprenticeship requirements that had been jerry-rigged to ease the transition for owners. These upheavals brought into being a new liberal imperial system, a system that would come to be characterized by free trade, free labor, legal and political rights for

those who were considered qualified to exercise them, and moral improvement for those who were not.

Free trade was the most widely trumpeted feature of the new system. From the perspective of its beneficiaries in Britain, it swept away over a century of trade restraints and distortions, liberating the entrepreneurial spirit and spurring wealth production (Howe 1997). Persuading other states that opening their markets to British merchants was good for them required more than preaching the doctrines of Adam Smith, however. Far too often, it required gunboat diplomacy. A number of Latin American states experienced this heavy-handed proselytism. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire was coerced into signing a free trade agreement in 1838, with Egypt and Persia following suit three years later. Perhaps the most notorious demonstration of free trade's use of imperial power took place in China, where in 1839 the British launched the first Opium War in order to pry open that potentially vast market. Although the outcome significantly expanded British traders' access to Chinese consumers, the Celestial kingdom continued to oppose the legal importation of opium, which was the main wedge of Western capitalist penetration. Hence, the British went to war again in 1856, this time striking at the heart of the Qing dynasty in Beijing, burning down the summer palace and imposing a humiliating treaty on a now tottering regime.

The proponents of free trade pointed out that Britain opened its own markets, including colonial ones, to foreign competition. And it was true that although many colonial producers had had a vested interest in the maintenance of preferential tariffs and other taxes, the British government systematically dismantled these mercantilist measures. In 1833 the East India Company lost the last of its monopoly trading rights when Parliament opened its lucrative East Asian market to independent merchants. Sugar duties designed to protect West India planters were reduced in 1841 and eliminated altogether in 1846. So too were the preferences that had subsidized Canadian timber and wheat exports. The Australian colonies were forced to adopt a uniform system of duties in 1850, meant to raise revenues without privileging imports from particular countries. While such actions ostensibly opened these markets to all comers, Britain's unchallenged control over shipping routes and fleets, banking and insurance services, and the other lineaments of international trade, ensured that the colonies remained very much within its economic orbit (Cain and Hopkins 1993: [Chapter 8](#)).

Free labor was the second major pillar of liberal imperialism. It rested first and foremost on the abolition of slavery, which was justified both on humanitarian grounds (evidenced in the Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion slogan, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?') and on an argument of economic efficiency. When a British delegation was sent up the Niger River in the early 1840s to persuade African chiefs to renounce slave trading, the liberal minister Lord John Russell advised its members to make the case that 'every man naturally works harder for himself than for another, and is more economical and more careful in his own property; consequently . . . the produce of his country would be much greater by free labour than by any other system' (Parliamentary Paper 1843: 7).

The only viable options available to the freed slaves on the Caribbean sugar islands, however, were to continue to work on the plantations of their ex-owners or scrape by through subsistence farming or odd jobs. Understandably, most of

them chose the latter, wanting nothing more to do with their previous subjugators. This left planters with a labor void they moved to fill by importing large numbers of indentured workers from India. This strategy proved so successful that it soon spread across the empire. By the mid 1860s more than half a million indentured Indians had been shipped from their homeland to Mauritius, Jamaica, Trinidad, Natal, and other colonies where large-scale plantation agriculture required a cheap and abundant labor supply. This massive migration has been termed by one historian as ‘a new system of slavery’ (Tinker 1974). Many indentured laborers were recruited under false pretenses and subjected to various forms of employer abuses. It should be acknowledged, however, that most of them had contracts that specified their wages, working conditions, and length of service (usually three to five years), making their conditions of employment far less onerous than chattel slavery. Furthermore, from 1837 onward the Indian government instituted a fitfully rigorous regulatory regime that sought to protect indentured laborers from mistreatment, mirroring in some ways the legislative measures established at the same time to mitigate the exploitation of female and child labor in British factories and mines. Both initiatives were premised on the same liberal notion that the state had a moral obligation to protect those who were incapable of protecting themselves.

By the same token, liberal doctrine held that most workers should be free to run the risks and reap the rewards of the labor market without interference from the state. For far too many colonial subjects, of course, that market was hardly free: it was occluded by debt bondage, *corvée*-like labor demands, and other customary constraints, as well as master-and-servant laws, pass ordinances, and similar statutory devices designed by British authorities to exert extra-economic leverage over workers. Yet Marx and Engels were surely right when they famously asserted in 1848 that the main thrust of ‘the world market’ – a market largely made and managed by Britain’s liberal empire at this time – was toward free labor, with ‘no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash-payment”’ (Marx and Engels 1948: 10, 11). And while they were hardly alone in associating this new freedom with ‘wage slavery’, Victorians for the most part regarded it as a great improvement – both in terms of morality and economic efficiency – over the coercive labor regimes that had previously shackled workers to the whims of employers.

The British Isles themselves would assume unprecedented importance in the nineteenth century as a source of labor for the empire, and there too the turn to free labor was telling. When the Napoleonic Wars came to an end, the Royal Navy ended the practice of impressing sailors, one of the most widely resented forms of unfree labor imposed on British subjects. The use of convict labor from Britain, so common to colonial enterprises in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, soon came to an end as well. A Parliamentary select committee exposed the cruelties and inefficiencies of convict transportation in 1837. New South Wales received its last convict ship in 1840, and although a dwindling number of convicts would continue to be shipped to other Australian colonies over the next two decades, transportation increasingly came to be seen as an archaic relic of an illiberal past.

The Victorians preferred to populate their overseas territories with free and willing colonists. To this end they created a select committee to investigate colonial ‘waste lands’ suitable for settlement in 1836, appointed an agent-general to oversee emigration in 1837, and established a Colonial Land and Emigration Commission in 1840 to devise uniform policies for assisted emigration and land distribution. Much of the intellectual inspiration for these efforts came from the liberal imperialist Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who first came to notice with his compelling *Letter from Sydney*, an extended essay that argued against the use of convict labor in Australia as a degrading and inefficient ‘species of slave-labor’ and advocated instead the assisted emigration of British paupers, whose passages would be paid for with funds collected through the sale of colonial ‘waste’ land. Wakefield was responding to Thomas Malthus’s dire predictions of overpopulation, offering his scheme as a way for Britain to avoid demographic catastrophe, for the surplus poor to escape starvation, and for the colonies to obtain much needed labor. Versions of this scheme were introduced in several Australian colonies and in New Zealand, while Wakefield’s broader conceit of emigration as an escape valve for social pressures at home and as an impetus for the creation of overseas ‘extension[s] ... of Britain itself’ became integral to the Victorian idea of empire (Wakefield 1829: 37, 189).

The political promise of liberalism, with its presumption that the institutions of government should reflect the will of the governed, was first and most fully realized in the colonies that absorbed large numbers of British emigrants. Rebellions in upper and lower Canada in 1837 and 1838 served as a wake-up call for imperial authorities, who began to realize that they could no longer govern settler populations autocratically. The Durham Report of 1839, drafted in response to that crisis and reflecting recommendations made by Wakefield, laid the institutional and ideological foundations for what became known as ‘Responsible Government’. What this meant was the transfer of the colony’s domestic affairs, including taxing and spending policies, to an elected legislative assembly – in effect, internal self-government. The first beneficiaries were the Canadian colonies in 1848–49. New Zealand was granted responsible government in 1852, the Cape Colony in 1854, New South Wales and Victoria in 1855, Tasmania and South Australia in 1856, and Queensland in 1859. The second stage in the settler colonies’ march toward greater political autonomy was the federation movement. Canadian Confederation in 1867, conceived as a counterweight to an expansionist United States, cleared the way for the colonization of the western Canadian plains, the extension of political rights to the settlers who flocked there, and the establishment of a much larger and more secure state. Nearly 20 years of negotiations led to the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, which granted that continent’s colonists greater political autonomy. In southern Africa, a similar outcome was delayed by the prolonged and violent struggle between Britons and Boers, but by 1910 the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State had been conjoined in the self-governing Union of South Africa.

As settlers assumed more control over their own affairs, the political and social policies they adopted were often more progressive than any instituted in Britain itself (Thompson 2005: [Chapter 6](#)). Several Australian legislatures approved the secret ballot in the 1850s, and the Cape Colony’s government ‘was just about the

most democratic in the world' when it was established in 1853 due to its liberal, color-blind franchise (Ross 1999: 174). When the British Parliament finally took up the issue of whether to grant some working men the right to vote more than a decade later, both its proponents and its critics cited the experiences of the self-governing colonies in making their cases. New Zealand granted women the right to vote in 1893 and the Commonwealth of Australia did so in 1902 (though South Australia had already enfranchised women in 1895); Britain did not do the same until 1918. Colonial trade unionists generally enjoyed far more freedom and exercised far greater power than did British trade unionists. Settler governments introduced free public education and other social services long before they appeared in the home country. Unburdened by the atavistic weight of an established church, hereditary aristocracy, and other agents of tradition and privilege, they embraced an egalitarianism that their progressive counterparts back in Britain could only dream of. 'Some object to the independence of their manner, but I do not,' declared an English visitor to New Zealand about its colonists: 'on the contrary I like to see the upright gait, the well-fed, healthy look, the decent clothes (even if no one touches his hat to you), instead of the half-starved, depressed appearance, and too often cringing servility of the mass of our English population' (Sinclair 1969: 97).

Still, egalitarianism had its limits. With rare exceptions, it did not extend to the colonies' native inhabitants, who were invariably characterized by settlers as brutish, slothful savages. Such judgments served to legitimize military campaigns that drove indigenes from their lands, pushed them into states of dependency, or simply exterminated them, as happened, for example, to the Aborigines of Tasmania. This shameful story of subjugation, dispersal, and destruction was a familiar one, having characterized the colonization of North America, and Ireland before that. John Locke, arguably liberalism's founding father, had helped to rationalize settler depredations by advancing the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which asserted that 'savage' peoples had no rightful claim to the lands they inhabited.

Many Victorian liberals, however, were dismayed by the violence so often perpetrated against native peoples on colonial frontiers. The humanitarian ethos that had energized the campaigns against the slave trade and slavery inspired some of the same parties to seek to protect indigenes from settlers. They engineered an exposé by the Select Committee on Aborigines in 1835–36 and established the Aborigines Protection Society in 1837. Missionaries laboring in remote parts of South Africa, Australia, and elsewhere supplied their allies at home with a steady stream of intelligence about settler violence against native peoples. The humanitarian lobby often had a sympathetic ear in the Colonial Office, especially after the appointment of James Stephen as under-secretary (1836–47). But liberals' efforts to protect the natives repeatedly collided with their belief that colonists had a right to self-governance. And once the colonists had won that right, the humanitarian lobby lost much of its leverage over the treatment of the indigenous inhabitants.

The moral dilemmas that confronted Victorian liberals who sought to reconcile the interests of colonial settlers and indigenous peoples are revealingly encapsulated in the shifting attitudes and actions of two well-known colonial officials, George Grey and Edward Eyre. The parallel careers of these men highlight the contra-

dictions that arose as humanitarian liberals assumed authoritarian powers. Both Grey and Eyre originally came to public attention as explorers in Australia, where they showed remarkable sensitivity and restraint in their encounters with Aborigines, whom they made serious efforts to understand and protect. Even in exceptionally trying circumstances, they expressed a genuine humanitarian fellow-feeling for these peoples. When Grey was forced to kill an Aborigine who had attacked and seriously wounded him with a spear, he ‘felt deeply the death of him I had been compelled to shoot; and I believe that when a fellow-creature falls by one’s hand, even in a single combat rendered unavoidable in self-defence, it is impossible not sincerely to regret the force of so cruel a necessity’ (Grey 1841: I, 152). And when two of Eyre’s Aboriginal assistants murdered the only other European in his party and fled with the expedition’s remaining supplies, leaving Eyre in desperate straits, he refused to attribute their betrayal to any flaws of racial character. ‘Nor would Europeans, perhaps, have acted better,’ he observed. ‘In desperate circumstances men are ever apt to become discontented and impatient of restraint’ (Eyre 1845: II, 25).

As a result of their accomplishments as explorers, both Grey and Eyre obtained appointments as colonial officials. Grey, the more successful of the two, served as governor of South Australia, New Zealand (twice), and Cape Colony. He acquired a reputation as a dynamic and progressive official. He appointed special magistrates to serve as native protectors in South Australia (Eyre among them) and he did his best to learn the languages and customs of the indigenous peoples in each of the colonies he governed. Yet he also launched ruthless military campaigns to subjugate the Maori of New Zealand and the Xhosa of the Cape, thereby advancing the interests of the colonial state, the settler community, and, as he saw it, civilisation itself. This ‘quintessential representative of how nineteenth-century liberalism reconciled itself to the building of empire’ committed ‘one of the great atrocities of empire’ when he masterminded the destruction of the Xhosa (Price 2008: 268, 269).

Eyre entered government service as a Protector of Aborigines in South Australia, where contemporary reports indicate he won the genuine trust and affection of his wards. This led in turn to his appointment as lieutenant-governor of New Zealand, lieutenant-governor of St Vincent, and, finally, governor of Jamaica. Here his career came to a terrible climax when black peasants rose up and killed some 20 planters and militia in the Morant Bay uprising of 1865. Eyre responded by launching a bloody campaign of state terror that resulted in nearly 800 deaths, nearly half of them by summary execution under martial law. Few events in the nineteenth-century empire more dramatically exposed the gulf between the liberal ideals of the Victorians and the brutal demands of imperial rule. Public opinion in Britain split sharply between those who considered Eyre a murderer whose crimes required prosecution, and those who saw him as a hero deserving the nation’s thanks. Although he escaped legal penalties, he never received another colonial appointment. This disturbing denouement to the career of a man who at one time had seemed to exemplify humanitarian liberalism proved emblematic of the problem that confronted the Victorians as they struggled to reconcile liberal ideals with imperial power (Evans 2005). Much the same trajectory as the one Eyre experienced

can be traced elsewhere across the empire: An early surge of confidence by liberals in their ability to make the imperial project conform to their reformist ambitions, followed by moral compromises and hardening racial attitudes as they confronted complexities and crisis they never anticipated.

Nowhere did this pattern play out more dramatically and influentially than in India, which held unrivaled importance to the Victorian Empire. Liberalism arrived in India in the early nineteenth century, in opposition to two parties it disdained as the enabling partners of a decadent order – one a complacent East India Company regime corrupted by its plundering militarism and embrace of immoral Oriental customs, the other an indigenous elite of Muslim princes and Brahmin priests who conspired to keep the Indian people captive to tradition and superstition. The 1828 appointment of Lord William Bentinck as governor-general cleared the way for a liberal coalition of utilitarians, evangelicals, and their allies to capture key positions in the colonial state, turning India into a laboratory for reform (Metcalf 1995: [Chapter 2](#)). Customs deemed morally reprehensible, such as *sati* (the ritual burning of high-caste Hindu widows on their husbands' funeral pyres), were suppressed, the legal system was remodeled and 'rationalized' on English principles, and education was restructured to reflect Western knowledge and values. As Thomas Macaulay, the Company's law minister, notoriously asserted in his influential 'minute' (memorandum) on education (1835), 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabic,' which he dismissed as 'absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology' (Macaulay 1835: 165, 172). This disdain for India's cultural heritage was characteristic of Victorian liberals' attitude to colonized peoples' beliefs and practices, which they viewed to be little more than impediments to the progress and improvement that were sure to come with their reforms. This view served in turn to rationalize their willingness to exert autocratic authority over Indians, who were considered incapable of acting in their own best interests. No less an authority than John Stuart Mill, the Victorians' preeminent liberal philosopher (whose day job was in the East India Company's London headquarters), made this clear, affirming in his classic essay *On Liberty* that 'despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement and the means justified by actually effecting that end' (Mill 1865: 6).

The liberal case for imperial rule, then, hinged on the claim that it would eventually make subject peoples more civilised, preparing them for a time when they would be capable of governing themselves in a responsible and rational fashion. This was the purpose of the educational reforms advocated by Macaulay. He envisioned a future in which a new breed of Western-educated Indians would come into being, imbued with an appreciation of British ideas, values, and institutions, and thereby prepared to assume their own governance. Macaulay warned his countrymen that they would need to grant Indians their independence when that time arrived: 'We are free, we are civilized, to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilization' (Macaulay 1952: 717–18).

An early inkling of what Macaulay's Indians of the future might look like could be found in Calcutta's *bhadralok*, an elite coterie of merchants, lawyers, clerks,

and others who seemed increasingly at ease with Western culture. Their leading light was Ram Mohan Roy, the Bengali scholar and Company employee who founded the Brahmo Samaj, a Hindu reform society that seemed to some British observers all but indistinguishable from Unitarianism. Roy acquired celebrity status in liberal and radical circles when he came to Britain in 1831, seemingly endorsing their own opinions on religious heterodoxy, political liberty, women's rights, and more (Zastoupil 2010). Other clusters of Westernized elites soon began to spring up elsewhere across India, most notably the Parsis of Bombay. As British capitalist enterprise and its technological infrastructure (railways, telegraph lines, and more) penetrated ever further into the interior of the country, many Company officials confidently predicted that the encrusted traditions of India's past would be scraped away by the forces of modernity.

Even in their heyday, however, the liberal proponents of social reform and economic development faced rivals who harbored very different designs for India. The army tended to operate on the premise that the only way to maintain imperial control was to cow Indians through the use of naked power. Frequent wars along the frontiers of British India – most notably against the Burmese in 1823–26, 1852–53, and 1885–86, against the Afghans in 1839–42 and 1878–80, and against the Sikhs in 1845–46 and 1848–49 – gave them plenty of opportunities to practice a rougher justice. When General Charles Napier conquered Sind in 1843, for example, he ruled by decree and carried out summary executions with alacrity, causing consternation and pangs of conscience among the East India Company's civilian officials. Trying to control the military 'man on the spot' was no less a problem for liberal imperial authorities than trying to prevent colonial settlers from exterminating indigenous peoples.

The most substantial reservoir of resistance to liberal reforms, however, came from Indians themselves, especially those traditional elites and their retainers who retained allegiance to an attenuated Mughal court or to semi-autonomous princely states at risk of annexation, not to mention the many Indians who feared that evangelical Christian missionaries and their official allies were undermining the spiritual authority of Islam and Hinduism. Their determination to defend the institutions and values that the Company's policies seemed to threaten helped to transform a mutiny by Indian *sepoys* (soldiers) – by no means an unprecedented occurrence – into a far larger and more terrible conflagration, a brutal race war that swept across the plains of northern India in 1857–58, leaving in its wake widespread destruction and countless dead. The Mutiny/Rebellion and its suppression by British forces and their Indian allies starkly exposed the ugly underside of imperial rule – its seething hatreds, its indiscriminate violence, its ruthless oppression – and traumatized an entire generation of the subcontinent's inhabitants, both colonizers and colonized alike.

Sifting through the ruins of their work in the aftermath of the Mutiny/Rebellion, liberal imperialists were understandably chastened and cautious about pressing forward with further grand initiatives to remake Indian society. In the royal proclamation of 1858, which announced the transfer of authority over India from the East India Company to the British Crown, Queen Victoria sought to reassure Indians that her government would 'abstain from all interference with the Religious

Belief or Worship of any of Our Subjects, on pain of Our highest Displeasure.’ She went on to affirm that all of her subjects, ‘of whatever Race or Creed, [would] be freely and impartially admitted to Offices in our Service,’ with the proviso that they ‘be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity’ (Proclamation 1858). Both of these ostensibly liberal commitments acquired a more conservative inflection in the coming decades. The promise of religious freedom carried with it the hardening conviction that the Indian character was far less pliable or amenable to the obvious advantages of British civilisation and the truths of the Christian faith than officialdom’s pre-rebellion generation had anticipated. The Raj operated on the premise that most Indians were innately conservative, their potential for improvement limited by their adherence to traditional communities, castes, and customs, and that the best the British could hope to achieve was a stable and reasonably efficient government, operating in uneasy alliance with princes, landlords, and other representatives of what was seen as an unchanging agrarian order. By the same token, the British grew increasingly disdainful of those Indians who did seem open to Western values and ideas of progress. Now that more and more ambitious young colonial subjects were fulfilling Macaulay’s dream of Anglicization by learning English, reading Shakespeare, donning dark suits and stiff collars, acquiring legal training, and seeking ‘Office in our Service,’ they came to be derided by the colonizers as effeminate *babus*, mimic men whose presumed lack of authenticity made them morally and politically suspect.

Similar shifts of opinion and setbacks to high-minded liberalism occurred elsewhere in the empire from the 1860s onward. In Jamaica, for example, the high hopes that missionaries and other liberals had invested in emancipated slaves across the West Indies gradually gave way to disillusionment as these newly freed peoples failed to live up to the expectations of their paternalistic patrons. The Morant Bay uprising that Governor Eyre crushed with such ruthlessness resulted in a retreat from the liberal language of moral uplift across the British Caribbean, to be replaced by ‘a harsher racial vocabulary of fixed differences’ (Hall 2002: 440). This rigid racialism began to infect relations in West Africa as well, despite the fact that the region was home to a prosperous and influential community of creoles who had embraced British Christian liberal culture as their own. In Free-town, Lagos, and other entrepôts along the coast, black Victorian traders, lawyers, teachers, journalists, and other professionals organized bible-reading and scientific societies, attended music recitals and cricket matches, and professed the virtues of self-help, improvement, and respectability (Spitzer 1974; Zachernuk 2000). Among their luminaries were Samuel Crowther, a ‘recaptive’ (a slave freed by the Royal Navy and repatriated in Sierra Leone) who became the first African bishop of the Anglican Church, overseeing its operations in southern Nigeria, and James ‘Africanus’ Horton, the child of captives who obtained a medical degree at the University of Edinburgh and served in the British Army’s medical corps before becoming a banker and mining entrepreneur. Responding to the strident ‘scientific’ racism that arose in the 1860s, Horton wrote a book about the peoples of West Africa that sought to reaffirm the liberal belief in ‘the Progressive Advancement of the Negro Race under Civilizing Influence,’ the title of one of his chapters (Horton 1969: Chapter 6). Fewer of the British officials who oversaw West African affairs,

however, would come to share Horton's views in the following decades, and colonial policy increasingly sought instead to marginalize the region's Westernized African elites and draw sharper racial boundaries between black and white.

By the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the complex and contested relationship between liberalism and imperialism had become all but unmanageable, exposing as never before the contradictions that cut through the Victorian empire. An array of forces – technological, economic, political, and ideological – contributed to this crisis. Railroads, steamships, telegraph lines, submarine cables, the Suez Canal, and other triumphs of industrial technology brought the British Empire's vast and varied populations into unprecedented communication and contact. The rapid circulation of information by means of the penny post, telegrams, and, above all, newspapers (which proliferated across the empire in the late nineteenth century), made it possible for literate colonial subjects to widen their intellectual and political horizons, learning more about debates and events that were taking place in other colonies and countries and giving vent to their own dissatisfactions. Furthermore, the greater ease and reduced cost of transportation allowed a growing number of them to travel to the heart of the empire, arriving on British shores as students, tourists, members of political delegations, and job seekers. Indians far outnumbered visitors from other dependent territories – between 1865 and 1885 some 700 Bengalis alone came to Britain to study (Lahiri 2000: 3) – but growing numbers of Africans, West Indians, and other colonial subjects were now making the pilgrimage to the center of imperial power as well. Here they met one another and shared grievances, opinions, and strategies. They responded to what they observed and experienced in the imperial metropolis in a two-fold fashion – energized on the one hand by the exuberant freedoms that liberalism granted people in Britain, embittered on the other hand by the constraints that colonial authorities imposed on them in their own lands. It was, to be sure, possible still to be an empire loyalist, believing in the promise of imperial citizenship: Mohandas Gandhi insisted in 1895 that Indians 'are proud to be under the British Crown, because they think that England will prove India's deliverer' (Brown 1990: 64). But growing numbers of well-educated, Westernized colonial subjects – the new men envisioned by Macaulay – were finding common ground in the conviction that the British must either live up to their liberal principles by admitting them into equal partnership in the empire or surrender their imperial power altogether.

Gandhi himself began to rethink his views as a result of his experience in Natal (and South Africa more generally), where local authorities sought to disenfranchise Indian residents, force them to carry identity passes, and prohibit the entry of any additional immigrants from India. What Gandhi observed in South Africa was part of a broader pattern of racially discriminatory legislation passed by settler legislatures in the self-governing colonies in the late nineteenth century. Like their nonwhite counterparts in India and the crown colonies, white settlers in South Africa, Australia, and the like made use of improvements in communication and transportation to engage increasingly in cross-colonial dialogue with one another. The main ideological drive in that dialogue, however, was not the unrealized promise of liberalism, but the untapped power of racialism. The growing number of Indians, Chinese, and other nonwhite labor migrants who were coming in these

colonies in the late nineteenth century to work in plantations, mines, and other low-wage industries sparked a backlash by white settlers, fearful for their own jobs and convinced that they were being swamped by what the American racist Lothrop Stoddard would characterize as ‘the rising tide of color’. Colonial legislatures in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa exchanged proposals for racially exclusionary immigration laws and settler leaders spoke of the self-governing colonies’ shared identity as ‘white men’s countries.’ In 1896 the premiers of Australia’s colonies agreed on legislation that laid the foundations for the notorious ‘white Australia’ policy, which ‘encoded for the first time,’ as Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds aptly put it, ‘the division of the world into white and not-white’ (Lake and Reynolds 2008: 145).

How did the British government and public respond to this increasingly serious racial schism between colonial subjects concerning the nature and future of the empire? Although the Colonial Office vetoed some of the more obvious and egregious efforts to impose racial restrictions on entry to the settler colonies, British opinion itself moved toward a more racialized conception of empire as well. The late Victorian historians John Seeley and James Anthony Froude privileged the white settler colonies in their bestselling books about the empire, *The Expansion of England* (1883) and *Oceana: Or, England and Her Colonies* (1886), stressing the racial bond between the British at home and their colonial cousins abroad, while dismissing India and the crown colonies as anomalous acquisitions that were too backward to be anything more than white men’s burdens. They helped to inspire the imperial federation movement, a mélange of organizations that sought to bring Britain and its settler colonies into closer association, with some groups advocating an imperial *zollverein* or customs union and others promoting an imperial parliament. The federation campaign was premised on the conviction that technological advances in communication and transportation had dissolved distance, making it possible to reunite the far-flung members of the British ‘family’ in some sort of trans-oceanic superstate (Bell 2007: [Chapter 3](#)).

The ‘new’ imperialism of the late nineteenth century, which brought about an enormous expansion in the geographical scope of the empire, also accentuated the racial distinctions between settler and crown colonies in the British public’s mind. The bulk of the newly claimed territories stretched across sub-Saharan Africa, with other gains in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and most of their indigenous inhabitants were classified as primitives by their British overlords. The bloody military campaigns that crushed native resistance in the Sudan, the Gold Coast, Southern Rhodesia, and elsewhere made national heroes of army officers like Herbert Kitchener and Garnet Wolseley, while any moral objections to the atrocities they perpetrated were brushed aside by an ascendant social Darwinism, which attributed these sorry outcomes to the operations of natural laws. ‘The weaker races,’ one of those social Darwinists blithely declared, ‘disappear before the stronger through the effects of mere contact’ (Kidd 1894: 46). The fact of the matter, of course, is that these ‘races’ did not ‘disappear’, despite a willingness by some to countenance their extermination. But they did become ineluctably branded as savage peoples, incapable of attaining the standards of civilisation that liberal imperialism had believed at one time to be universally applicable. Moreover, their

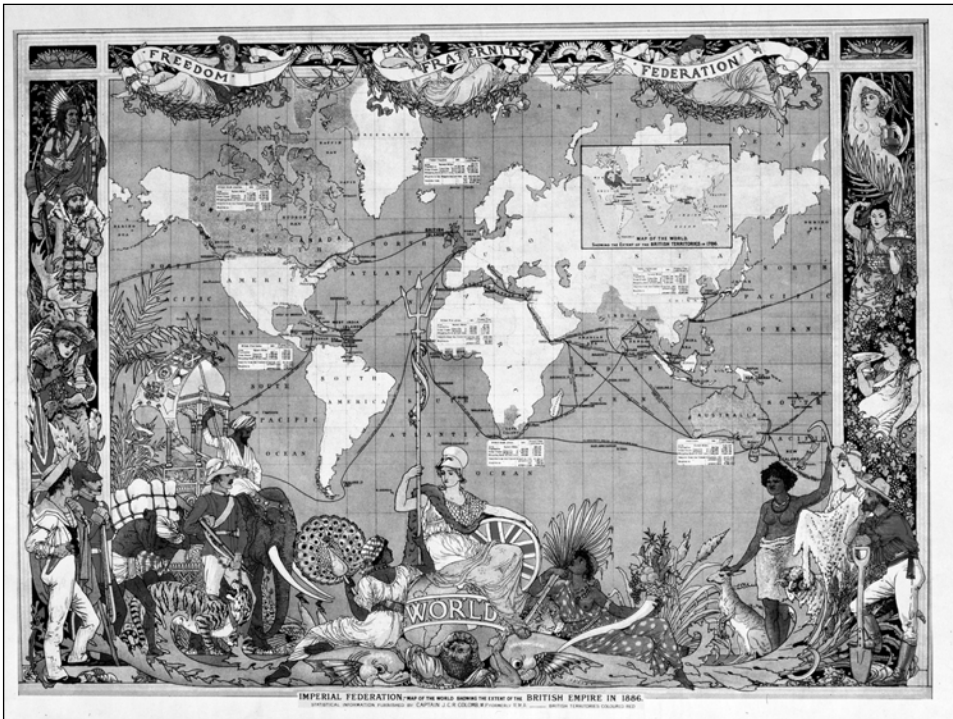


Figure 2.2 T762 MR World 740 Imperial Federation showing the map of the world, British Empire, by Captain J. C. Colombo, c. 1886 (facsimile).
© Royal Geographical Society, London. The Bridgeman Art Library

integration into the empire reinforced the racial dichotomy that already differentiated the self-governing colonies from those that operated under authoritarian rule. Now, more than ever, the British imperial imagination lumped Indians, Malays, Africans, and other nonwhite peoples together in a category that excluded them from the promise of liberalism.

* * *

In one of the most famous of the post-Bartholomew maps of the late Victorian Empire, a vividly colored, lavishly illustrated cartographic depiction of British imperial territories around the world appeared as a supplement to *The Graphic* newspaper in 1886 (Driver 2010). Titled 'Imperial Federation,' its upper border was illustrated with three graces bearing the banners 'Freedom,' 'Fraternity,' and 'Federation,' and crowding around the map's other edges was a cartouche of empire builders and their subjects, with Britannia strategically positioned in the lower center, sitting atop the globe in all her glory. Perhaps this was the map that Labour's great postwar prime minister Clement Attlee recalled from his schooldays in the 1890s: 'On the wall at school hung a great map with large portions of it coloured red. It was an intoxicating vision for a small boy' (Attlee 1960: 6). No doubt it

was, but it is worth observing how that vision had narrowed from the earlier point of observation produced by Bartholomew. Although the white figures in the map's cartouches were recognizable occupational types – a soldier, a sailor, a trapper, a farmer, a hardy housewife – only a few of the non-white figures were similarly personalized. Instead, allegorical types stood in for indigenous peoples: bare-breasted, dark-skinned women, who served to personify colonial dependency and fecundity. Unlike the colonial subjects who inhabited the borders of Bartholomew's map, they did not share the same particularity of person and place as did the cartouche's British subjects. The message meant to be drawn from this representational disparity is that they did not share in the mapmakers' celebration of freedom, fraternity, and federation. This map, in effect, acknowledged an abandonment of the universalist ambitions that had sought to shape the course and character of liberal imperialism. It supplied a visual record of what can be regarded in retrospect as the ideological collapse of the great arch of the Victorian empire.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE SHRINKING VICTORIAN WORLD



Peter J. Hugill

It is now widely accepted in historical sociology that the concept of time-space distanciation is central to understanding ‘how social systems “bind” time and space’ (Giddens 1981: 90; Warf 2008). Victoria’s reign saw major accelerations in communications, both in a purely physical sense of movement of goods and people, and in an electronic sense in the movement of information. These accelerations produced major reconfigurations in the organization of time and space by people and societies, first identified by Hägerstrand (1975). More recently Harvey has analyzed time-space compression as central to the emergence of the modern and postmodern worlds (Harvey 1989).

Although there were pre-modern time-space compressions of great consequence, such as those surrounding the emergence of states and bureaucratic governments in the Middle East and China some 10,000 years BP, the cumulative impact of the Victorian time-space compressions was unprecedented in world history. Since then, air travel, containerization, the elaboration of stock trading via such agencies as NASDAQ, the internet, and the world wide web have made for radical changes, but they are all based on the time-space compressions of the Victorian age. The Victorian time-space compressions facilitated much more rapid movement: of highly trained and valuable business and political leaders; of un- and semi-skilled masses as cheap labour; of raw materials and manufactured goods; and, via vastly improved mail services and the telegraph, of information. These resulted in the rapid development of an elaborate, increasingly global economy. They also facilitated the rise of a greatly elaborated set of bureaucracies in the late 1800s: the private bureaucracies of the new corporations; the nation states of the ‘New Nationalism’, notably the Imperial German State created by Bismarck; and the explosion of imperialism after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, the ‘New Imperialism’. Many of these innovations originated in Britain, many more came from Europe and America: all diffused worldwide.

When Victoria came to the throne in 1837, people and information moved reliably only along highly defined land routes and sea lanes on foot, by horse, or in sailing ships, and movement was slow. In 1837 a letter from London would have taken nine months to reach San Francisco: by Victoria’s death in 1901 mail

took nine days and telegrams nine minutes. In 1840 the British introduced the ‘penny post’ anywhere in Britain: in 1898 they extended it throughout the British Empire. The first steamship to cross the Atlantic non-stop did so in 1838, and Britain dominated steamship design for the rest of the Victorian period. Following the success of Britain’s Liverpool and Manchester Railway of 1830, railroads exploded, nowhere more so than in America, where in 1837 advanced engineering produced a locomotive design that could cross serious topographic barriers. Telegraph lines followed, ensuring safety on the normally single-tracked American railroads. Chicago grew rapidly as *the* railroad centre for the entire interior of North America, but the city’s greatest innovation was the remarkable use of the telegraph network to create the world’s first futures market, a financial innovation as great as the burgeoning global stock and insurance market being managed out of London. In the 1860s Britain cemented its hold on the global financial marketplace by the construction of a global network of submarine telegraph cables, completed in 1902 by the first trans-Pacific cable. At the close of the Victorian era, in 1901, the Italian-British engineer, Guglielmo Marconi, opened a new phase in telecommunications by sending the first wireless telegraph signal across the Atlantic.

The cumulative cultural impacts of all this technological change were spectacular: the markets for labour, both skilled and unskilled, capital, raw materials, manufactured goods, and services internationalized; global news networks developed to support powerful news empires and mass-market magazines; diplomats became able to communicate in near ‘real time’ across the globe; the military discovered ‘communications, command, and control’; and writers romanticized the new, globalized, world in the new entertainment media of mass-market newspapers, magazines, and novels. The political ramifications of the ‘New Nationalism’ and the ‘New Imperialism’ of the High Victorian Age were even farther reaching. Although Britain emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as an undisputed global power, after the fall of the first Empire in 1776 the British were more interested in controlling trade than controlling territory. Bismarck’s creation of the world’s first welfare system to help unify Germany in 1871 resulted in a much more powerful state designed to deliver social services, concerns about who should receive such services, and thus in many ways the ‘New Nationalism’. As the world economy started to ‘close’ it became obvious that access to resources would be increasingly constrained by politics and that political control over diverse production regions was necessary. The only way to ensure such control was via imperialism, as became obvious at the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, thus the ‘New Imperialism’.

At the start of Victoria’s reign the world was still highly compartmentalized: even news from neighbouring counties circulated slowly. At the end of it the world was almost entirely interlinked, and a London morning paper would contain futures reports from Chicago, reports of geographic expeditions to the far corners of the earth, and short stories of far away lands. It was the most remarkable time–space compression in human history.

I focus here on several key innovations:

- postal services;
- steam powered transportation;
- telegraphy;

- futures markets and stock markets;
- bureaucratic management;
- the intensification of identities.

POSTAL SERVICES

Although some recent writers have suggested that telegraphy provided a form of Victorian ‘internet’ (Standage 1998), the vast run of common people had little or no access to such expensive means of communication until very near the end of Victoria’s long reign. What they did have was a ‘penny post’. They embraced it with enthusiasm. Literacy levels rose rapidly in the late nineteenth century with compulsory education. Pre-paid, self-adhesive postage stamps and delivery to the recipient’s door made the service user friendly. Previously, recipients of mail had to collect correspondence at a post office and pay the mail charges: ‘the number of chargeable letters in 1839 had been only about 76 million. By 1850 this had increased to almost 350 million and continued to grow dramatically’ (<http://postalheritage.wordpress.com/2009/08/21/rowland-hill%E2%80%99s-postal-reforms/> accessed 7 November 2011). Given that salaries were increasing steadily in a period of price stability, this became an incredibly cheap service. Postcards, useful for short messages, were even cheaper, and mail carriers made multiple deliveries each day. The penny post was also the first major expansion of the state into social services.

STEAM POWERED TRANSPORTATION

Steam powered transportation developed in three important phases: on rivers; overland; and by sea. Steam powered river boats emerged almost contemporaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. Henry Bell’s *Comet* entered service on the Firth of Clyde in 1812; Robert Fulton’s *North River* connected New York to Albany in 1807. Wherever navigable rivers existed rivers boats could open up the continental interiors at little greater cost than the capital cost of the boat and the labour to run it, and as Britain’s later Victorian empire expanded they would find ready use. The pioneering boats built by Bell and Fulton could not, however, move upstream on fast flowing rivers. That took the marriage by Henry Shreve of a high-pressure steam engine to a Mississippi River keelboat in 1815. This opened almost the entire interior of North America south of the Great Lakes between the Rockies and the Appalachian Mountains for development, some 370 million acres (Hugill 1993a: 167–69). Such riverboats brought people and manufactured goods inland against the flow of the rivers. But sunken logs, ‘snags’, which riddled many rivers and could rip open the hull of a riverboat moving at speed, slowed their expansion. By 1830 there were only just over 32,000 tonnes working west of the Appalachians. In 1829 Shreve developed the double-hulled snagboat that guided the snag between its hulls and then used a steam engine to chop it into pieces. By 1850 over 300,000 tons were at work (Hugill 1993a: 169). The lessons learned in North America were not lost on the British as they sought to open up the interiors of Asia and Africa. All through Victoria’s reign ever-increasing amounts of agricultural surplus flowed back to coasts to be trans-shipped onto ocean-going ships bound for Britain.

In the Antebellum period in North America the main force for time-space compression was the steamboat. After the Civil War it rapidly became the railroad. From its peak in 1850, the tonnage of riverboats at work dropped below 170,000 by 1860, as competition from railroads increased. The advantage of the steamboat was its low cost, that of the railroad was the possibility of relative geographic ubiquity, albeit at much higher capital cost. That ubiquity first began to emerge in Britain before Victoria came to the throne, but British practice was to build lines to the minimum possible grade and use low-powered locomotives with small fireboxes. This required huge investments in infrastructure – careful ballasting under the track to ensure smooth running and avoid derailments, massive earth embankments, and numerous bridges and tunnels. Such investments were possible only in a state with a high population density and well-developed capital markets. Evocative of late Victorian British locomotive practice were powerful single driver locomotives, the most charismatic of which was Patrick Stirling's eight footer for the Great Northern Railway, built from 1870 on (Reed 1971). The costly infrastructure investments that produced an easily-graded line were impossible in America and made no economic sense on the imperial frontier, although British engineers initially, and expensively, developed India's railways on British lines (Headrick 1988: 75).

American locomotives needed to burn substantial amounts of fuel to generate enough power to climb substantial grades, and to be able to run on cheaply laid track. In 1837 the Philadelphia engineer, John Harrison, produced the first American class 4-4-0 locomotive 'Hercules' with a large firebox and three-point compensated springing that met these needs. (Hugill 1993a: 176). Between 1837 and around 1900 American class locomotives poured out of American shops to drive a vast expansion of mileage. By 1845 America already had almost twice the railroad mileage as the initial leader and nearest rival Britain. By 1900 America had more than twice the mileage of the next six largest railroading states combined, nearly 14 times that of Britain, and more than ten times that of India (Headrick 1988: 55). Between 1851 and 1852 five lines were completed connecting Eastern to Midwestern American cities, four to Chicago alone. By 1860 New York City to Chicago took about 40 hours, an average speed of around 20 miles per hour. Between 1868 and 1893 six lines crossed the Rockies (Vance 1995: 286, 201). After the Civil War the density of railroads increased spectacularly since they required only capital and relatively favourable topography, not a pre-existing river system. By 1880 few people in America east of the Mississippi were over 15 miles from a railroad (Hugill 1993a: 180). Although railroad technology spread rapidly to all the inhabited continents, railroads caused their most remarkable compression of time and space in North America.

Britain was slow to adopt American practices, but towards the close of the Victorian era British railroads began to copy American-style locomotives for their export markets, of which by far the most important was India, as well as to haul heavier trains at home. Initially British practice had sufficed for India, not only because of colonialism, but also because 'the landscape of India presented few problems to the railroad contractors'. After 1874 the British Government, which had guaranteed profits to investors in the earlier Indian lines, revolted and demanded more fiscal responsibility. This pushed Indian railroads into adopting

American models, the most significant of which were the Indian L class locomotives of 1880 on. These were derived from engines produced for the steep gradients of the Highland Railway of Scotland (Reed 1972: 110, 98). By the end of Victoria's reign the main British railroads had switched to American-style locomotives as trains became heavier (Reed 1971: 124).

The third huge impact of steam was on trans-oceanic movements. In 1838 the first steamship built for the purpose, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's *Great Western*, crossed the Atlantic. Unlike riverboats, steamships had to carry fresh water with them. The crucial innovation that permitted the Atlantic crossing was the condenser, converting used steam back to fresh water. Such steamships pushed the limits of available technology, were expensive to build and maintain, and charged frighteningly high fares for passengers. But they were much faster than sailing ships and demonstrated safety and regularity well beyond sailing ships. In 1839 Samuel Cunard, one of the *Great Western* company's competitors, acquired the first transatlantic mail contract, making his steamships profitable. Most transatlantic mail was financial information, so the safety and regularity particularly stressed by Cunard mattered. But because of the huge expense of the first generation steamships, their impact on the movement of people and goods was muted.

Other innovations followed. Better boilers were a must for the much larger, longer ships allowed by wrought iron. Mild steel construction allowed another 15 per cent reduction in weight and replaced iron in the early 1880s (Hall 1998: 365). Larger, lighter ships with finer lines were far more efficient, but the most crucial part of the innovation chain was in engines. As Hall has shown, a series of forces set off the 'long chains of innovation': expansive working in the 1840s and 1850s,

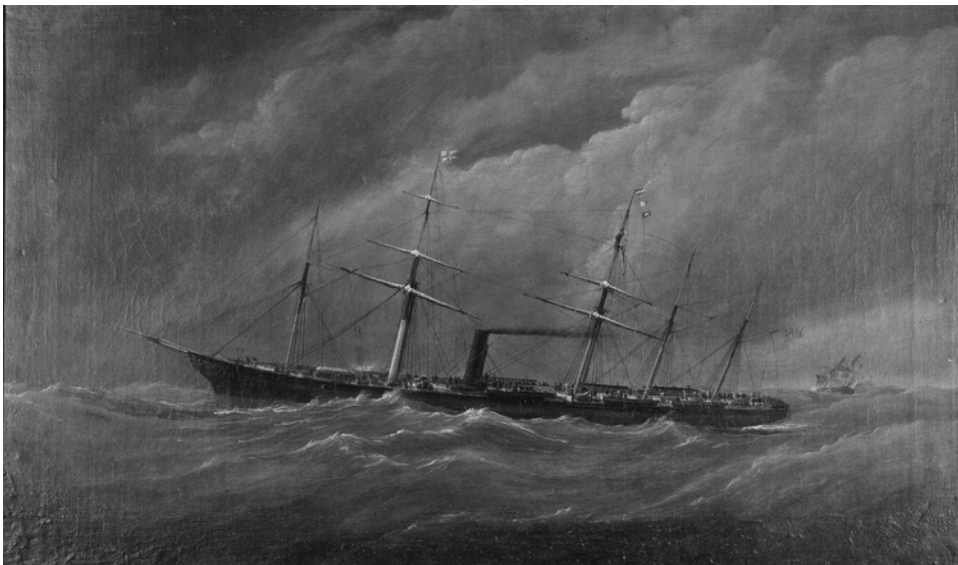


Figure 3.1 *SS Great Britain* by Joseph Walter (1883–1886)
Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool



Figure 3.2 *Telegraph* c. 1862. Painted by Constantino Brumidi
with kind permission from the US Senate Collection

compound engines in the 1860s, steel hulls and triple expansion engines in the 1880s, and turbines at the end of Victoria's reign, all of which made Glasgow pre-eminent in steamship construction by the late 1800s. Between 1879 and 1889 the tonnage launched on the Clyde increased massively, from 18,000 to 326,136, and the percentage of steel ships from 10.3 to 97.2. By the 1890s British yards were building almost 80 per cent of the entire world tonnage (Hall 1998: 363–72). It was impossible to sail through the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869, since there was no wind. A steamship passing through the Suez Canal could make Shanghai in under 50 days: the record for sailing clippers around Africa was 115 days.

The British dominated both the mass output of cargo steamships and the production of high-speed passenger liners in the late nineteenth century. Only in the latter would they be challenged before the end of Victoria's long reign. After holding the 'Blue Riband' of the fastest Atlantic crossing from 1838, with a very occasional American ship intruding, the British lost it for ten years running to a series of German liners, starting with *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* in 1898. The real import of the great liners from the 1880s on was not, however, their speed, but the exploding market in labour they served as the Americas industrialized in a period with no restrictions on migration. Ever larger liners moved millions of emigrants in steerage from Europe to the United States and Latin America.

Whereas in the early Victorian era few immigrants returned home, the greatly increased extent of reverse migration in the late Victorian era was a very real indication of how much time-space compression steamships had caused. Death rates for passengers in Atlantic sailing ships had often been appalling, up to 25 per cent in the case of starving Irish fleeing the potato famine in the 1840s (Hugill 1993b). The Irish held wakes for departing relatives since they knew they would

never see them again. As steamships proliferated in the late Victorian period such deaths dropped almost to zero. Both migration and reverse migration skyrocketed.

TELEGRAPHY

The most spectacular Victorian time-space compression was caused by the electric telegraph. There have been few studies of this, although the pioneering synthetic work of Harold Innis, initially ignored, elevated the study of communications in general to a central position in world history (Innis 1950, 1951) and created a model that has been used by others (Hugill 1999a). Electric telegraphs developed to serve railroads from 1839 onwards, the first being installed on the Great Western Railway out of London. Such telegraphs were complex and used a box full of needles, each of which moved briefly to spell out one letter of each message. They had to be carefully monitored. In 1844, based on technology first demonstrated in 1838, the world's first easily used public telegraph opened between Baltimore, MD, and Washington, DC, using the brilliant innovation by Samuel F. B. Morse and Alfred Vail of a simple binary code of long and short pulses. Initially, these were printed on paper tape, so messages did not have to be read in real time (Burns 2004: 74–84; Hugill 1999a). Morse's telegraph was adopted at a spectacular rate and impacted on all facets of Victorian life: transportation, commerce, news, politics, and international relations in particular.

In Britain and America the initial adoption of the telegraph was left to private enterprise, which saw its particular values for business communication and for railroad signalling. London rapidly became the hub of a telegraph network that served both needs by connecting British cities with lines laid along the rights of way of the country's burgeoning rail network. The advantage of telegraphic links to other stock markets was also quickly clear. In 1851 Julius Reuter moved to London from Germany to exploit that year's pioneering submarine cable across the Channel to serve the stock exchanges of London and Paris. Reuter's also quickly found that carrying news could make substantial profits. Although New York played some of the role of London in the American case, railroad signalling and news services were initially more important than business. The huge costs and distances involved in American railroading precluded double-tracking lines for safety in the British fashion: head-on collisions were frequent. Telegraphic signalling radically improved safety, and was quickly adopted. The next major users to emerge were news reporting services. In 1846 what would become the Associated Press formed in New York to share the costs of reporting the course of America's war with Mexico (1846–48), in part via the pony express and in part by telegraph. Its subscribers quickly realized that its long run advantage was that it allowed them to share the high costs of telegraphy to deliver news quickly to their papers (www.ap.org/pages/about/history/history_first.html, accessed 29 November 2010). In America business use focused on Chicago. Telegraph companies quickly discovered the substantial profits from carrying information about crop prices. This drove the emergence of the Chicago futures market for agricultural produce. By 1861 Western Union, formed in 1855, had connected America's vital Pacific port of San Francisco to New York, and in 1865 it began a valiant attempt to link America to Europe via Alaska and Siberia (Hugill 1999a).

In Europe the telegraph, though adopted enthusiastically, developed differently from Britain and America, as a series of nationalized systems that were not really designed to interconnect and began to do so efficiently only with the formation of the International Telegraph Union in 1865 and the revisions to that organization made in 1875 (Woolf 1916: 205–7). The British telegraphs were nationalized in 1868 because of arguments by the General Post Office that it should enjoy a monopoly on all forms of communication within the British Isles, not just letters (<http://distantwriting.co.uk/default.aspx> accessed 7 November 2011). The shareholders of the old private companies, bought out at generous rates, mostly invested their windfalls in shares of the new international submarine cable companies being formed in Britain in the later 1860s.

These British submarine cable companies, especially the Eastern and Eastern Extension group run by John Pender – now folded into the modern company, Cable and Wireless – rapidly connected almost the entire planet and ensured that London had the telecommunications needed to control the first integrated world economy (Hugill 1999a; Winseck and Pike 2007: 4, 43). The first submarine telegraph link from Britain to America was laid by the joint Anglo-American efforts of 1857 and 1858 using British and American naval ships. The 1857 cable was never completed and, although that of 1858 was, a lack of understanding of how electromagnetic waves were propagated caused it to quickly fail (Dibner 1959). The appalling expense of these failures persuaded Western Union that the best way was overland. The only submarine cable needed would be across the Bering Straits, and the English Channel was successfully cabled in 1851. After the end of the Civil War, Western Union employed military telegraphers to lay its overland cable. British engineers responded to the failure of the 1858 cable with a workable theory of propagation, a much better cable design, better laying practices, and a ship large enough to lay the cable at one shot, the *Great Eastern*, bought cheaply when it failed as a passenger liner. After a third failure to lay the cable in 1865, when it broke in mid Atlantic, *Great Eastern* successfully joined Britain to America by cable in 1866, then grappled up the broken 1865 cable and repaired it (Coates and Finn 1979). With the new technologies proven and profitable, British investors then proceeded to cable the world, with the last major line, that across the Pacific connecting the Americas to Australasia and Asia, completed in 1902 (Hugill 1999a).

Submarine cables also radically altered international diplomacy through intense time–space compression: international crises now had to be responded to in real time, without much time for reflection (Nickles 2003). As America and Germany sought to challenge British hegemony there was increasing realization that Britain's stranglehold on global telecommunications through its network of submarine cables was geopolitically problematic (Hugill 2009a). At the very end of the Victorian period both countries embarked on a search for an alternative the British could not control (Hugill 1999a; Winkler 2008).

FUTURES MARKETS AND STOCK MARKETS

The cumulative changes in telecommunications contributed to the rapid development of international markets for stocks, commodities, finished goods and services,

most particularly financial services. The latter preceded the Victorian era with the development by Lloyd's of London in the 1700s of the world's first effective market for insurance, initially of ships at sea. Access to information was a powerful driver here. Efficient mail service, packet boats, telegraphy, and wireless all improved information flow for insurers. At the end of the Victorian era Lloyd's would only give its highest insurance rating to ships that carried Marconi wireless equipment. Such improved information flow also helped London control the global market for capital throughout the Victorian era. Parkin described submarine telegraphs as the 'nerves' of Empire (Parkin 1894: 238).

The most radical innovation of the Victorian financial system was the development of futures trading. In 1877 the formation of the London Metal Exchange saw futures trading in metals begin in London: futures trading in grain followed in the 1880s. But the pioneering developments were in Chicago from 1848 on, when the Chicago Board of Trade was formed, and 1865, when the first standardized futures contracts were issued. By then the city had emerged as the great centre for railroads, water transport via the rivers and the Great Lakes, and telegraphs for almost all North America. Farmers received a higher price for their output in Chicago, of which the telegraph made them quickly aware. Before futures trading, grain was packaged, shipped, and sold in sacks, and moved by riverboats. Riverboats leaked, foundered, and burned, and farmers and shippers bore all risks of loss and paid high rates of insurance. Railroads revolutionized shipping by switching the unit of shipment to the carload and by moving grain far more quickly and safely. Cars could be loaded much faster using grain elevators, although to do so the grain had to be graded into a small number of standardized categories. But grain could now be treated as a liquid that moved in streams, not a solid in discrete sacks, which 'made it possible for people to buy and sell grain not as the physical product of human labour on a particular tract of prairie earth but as an abstract claim on the golden stream flowing through the city's elevators' (Cronon 1991: 104–32, quote from 120). The creation of the 'futures' market in order to make this abstract claim radically improved the ease of financing grain output, handling, shipping, and marketing, making it much easier for farmers to make rational planting decisions based on market demand, rather than relying on instinct and guesswork. Loans to farmers could then also be based on predicted demand for given crops. This had knock-on effects to providers of seed, fertilizer, shipping facilities and the like. The consequences were the much easier and far more reliable provisioning of rapidly growing Victorian cities.

BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT

From the 1870s on there are three less commented upon impacts of Victorian time-space compression. The Second Industrial Revolution brought the development of much larger, bureaucratically controlled corporations. The rise of the 'New Nationalism' and the 'New Imperialism' demanded substantially increased, centralized, and bureaucratized state control. In many ways these developed outside a Britain that remained committed to relatively small-scale governance and small, mostly family-held companies, although they would impact it massively in the Edwardian period.

In such liberal states as Britain and America individual liberties began to shrink as the provision of more and more late Victorian services fell into the hands of corporations. Although the political rights of citizens increased almost everywhere, so too did their responsibilities to the nation-states and empires within which their lives were increasingly embedded. As Max Weber classically put it in the first work of sociology to examine the rise of bureaucracies, ‘bureaucracy . . . is fully developed in political and ecclesiastical communities only in the modern state, and in the private economy only in the most advanced institutions of capitalism’ (Weber 1978: 956). Railroads and telegraphs were the key to the bureaucracies needed to manage these institutions, although they would be complemented by the telephone toward the end of the Victorian period, but ‘cities were the nerve centers of the system’ (Balogh 2009: 305–06). This was far more noticeable in America, and has been interpreted by business historians as the triumph of organizational management (Chandler 1977). As American firms strove for scale advantages and to serve their rapidly increasing national market, the expansion of managerial functions clearly drove the expansion of private bureaucracy. But in America the emergence of a national market following the Civil War was by no means a given, despite the interventionist nature of the Republican administration during that war and, crucially, the passing of the National Banking Act making the dollar the sole legal currency after 1863. It was much more a consequence of what Brian Balogh has called *A Government Out of Sight* (2009), a particular feature of which was intervention by the Supreme Court to guarantee the rights of corporations to resist constant attempts by state government to invoke the doctrine of ‘states’ rights’ and restrain the behaviour of such corporations within their political boundaries. The late Victorian corporation was thus a predominantly American development predicated on the Supreme Court’s 1886 decision in *Santa Clara County versus Southern Pacific Railroad*. This gave American corporations the same protection offered to individuals under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of 1868, which prevented Southern States from imposing ‘Black Codes’ to avoid giving their freed slaves equality under the law. As this subtle, Americanized ‘New Nationalism’ developed, a whole slew of other Supreme Court decisions naturalized the large national corporation in late Victorian America (Balogh 2009: 329–50).

As much larger scale markets emerged, much enlarged bureaucracies were needed to manage increasingly complicated production processes. The first industrial revolution had seen in Britain the development of a ‘heterogeneous employment situation: factories, artisan trades, street work, and domestic outwork, all interpenetrating one another . . . fusing employment, family, and local community against exploitation from outside’. The Second Industrial Revolution ‘brought concentrated capital, the large factory, and employers’ offensive de-skilling artisans while upgrading casual labourers to formal employment and semiskills . . . in response, workers developed extensive and political class organization evincing socialist tendencies’ (Mann 1993: 681). Outside Britain, where industrialization had been largely completed early in Victoria’s reign, the rapidity of the second industrialization caused massive disruption of agricultural populations as people were forced off the land and into the cities as cheap labour. In an America where, in Turner’s famous thesis, the frontier available for agricultural settlement did not

‘close’ until the 1890s (Turner 1893), the new industrialization could only be kept up by the massive immigration made possible by the late Victorian steamship.

Outside the liberal states the rise of the ‘New Nationalism’ was more important in the emergence of bureaucracies. To ensure acceptance of German unification under Prussian leadership, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck created the world’s first system of comprehensive social services – disability insurance in the work place, pensions, health insurance, and the like. Such ‘social imperialism’ spread rapidly since it allowed the new nation-states to use the provision of social services as an income transfer mechanism to reduce the tensions building in capitalist societies as a result of the growing economic inequalities of the late Victorian Gilded Age (Taylor and Flint 2006: 104–05). Social imperialism also pushed states into consideration of who was and was not entitled to state services, solidifying the concept of citizenship. Finally, it allowed the nation-state to identify who was and was not fit for military service, the creation of much more professional militaries under the bureaucratic control of General Staffs, and the ability to generate large conscript militaries when the need arose.

The increasingly bureaucratic nation-states could not have been administered without improvements in transportation and telecommunication facilitating central management of social resources. Increasingly elaborate local, regional, and central government bureaucracies developed to keep track of citizens, their responsibilities to their homeland in such areas as compulsory education and military service, and the benefits to which they were entitled. Although in general such forces operated less in the liberal states, they were far from absent and grew massively in the Victorian era. In the British night watchman state of 1840, local, regional, and central government civilian spending was 31 per cent of government expenditure: military spending accounted for only 26 per cent of central government spending. In 1840 the range of central government expenditures on the military in the core states of Austria, Prussia-Germany, France, Great Britain, and America was from 26 to 65 per cent. By 1900, however, expenditures by all governmental units (local, regional, and central) on social services in these core states were from 47 to 74 per cent, and by 1911, with civil debt included, ‘the true range for total civilian expenditures among all the states is about 70 to 85 percent’ of central government spending (Mann 1993: 373–75).

Expanded bureaucracies were also necessary to the successful operation of the ‘New Imperialism’ that developed after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. Beginning in America with the Morrill Tariff of 1861, individual states began to abandon free trade, arguing a need for protection so that they could industrialize (Hugill 2009b). In 1879 Imperial Germany moved to protection. Two of the three largest economies on the planet were now protectionist. This meant that the competition for resources and markets was no longer merely economic: protectionist policies pushed such competition into the realm of politics. In the largely organic economies of the period the need for resources and foodstuffs that could only be grown in tropical (sugar, tea, coffee, opium etc.) or sub-tropical climates (cotton, etc.) meant that political control of the appropriate territories was vital. Without colonies, Germany was more susceptible to this problem than any other state, hence the Berlin Conference. The southern states of America were sub-tropical, and by far the world’s greatest source of the cotton needed for the textile-led

industrialization that characterized the Victorian period. Britain already had both its empire for tropical goods and reliable access to American cotton, but by the late Victorian period it was becoming obvious that more efficient American textile mills could pay more for American cotton than British mills, and Britain began to seek remedies within territories it controlled politically (Hugill forthcoming). By the end of the Victorian period most of the world was organized politically into a series of imperial structures. Only the slow but successful development of organic chemistry would end a world economy in which imperial possession of a variety of climatically different territories was vitally necessary (Hugill 1993a; Hugill and Bachman 2005).

Inevitably these competing nation-state and imperial structures clashed. It seemed to many military minds from the mid-Victorian period onward that advances in first wired, then wireless telegraphy could be used to radically increase centralized command and control of militaries. This would thin the ‘fog of war’ somewhat and allow assets to be moved around quickly and efficiently both strategically during preparation for war, and tactically, on the battlefield itself. Wired telegraphy proved its worth in the American Civil War, but it was the emergence of wireless technologies that held real promise. The British Army experimented unsuccessfully with a primitive wireless system at the end of Victoria’s reign, during the Boer War, but it was in the navies of the world that wireless technology found its first natural home. Before, wireless ships that had left port were ‘lost’: with wireless they could be given constantly upgraded orders from naval headquarters.

THE INTENSIFICATION OF IDENTITIES

The second half of the Victorian era saw a remarkable intensification of identities, especially group identities, that arose out of the combination of increasing nationalism, improved literacy, better communications, and new forms of entertainment, especially group entertainment. Governments everywhere began to worry about how they could develop or strengthen a sense among their citizens of national identity. Businesses saw group entertainment as something that could generate profits. Both governments and businesses also began to see the need for more education, both of the workforce and to improve military performance as warfare intensified and became more technological. This greatly increased the demand for written material for education and entertainment, and wholly new forms of education emerged to increase solidarity. Team sports such as soccer, rugby, football, and baseball became increasingly popular, especially among the working classes. Better railroads and telecommunications meant a relatively limited number of entertainers in music halls and burlesque shows could move from city to city to provide the variety of shows needed to ensure repeat custom.

The intensity of this late Victorian time-space compression and its consequences for at least the British Empire were caught by Parkin at the end of the Victorian era:

the transactions of finance and commerce, the regulation of demand and supply, the direction of our commercial fleets and of the armed navy which defends them, all depend now in great measure on the far-reaching influence of electric

force . . . It is no flight of imagination, but a simple fact, to say that by the agency of the telegraph, backed up by the diffusive power of the press, in a few short hours the heart of our nation through all its worldwide extent may be made to beat with one emotion.

(Parkin 1894: 236–37)

Newspapers had always been important in the Western world, but after 1870 a slew of daily newspapers emerged to cater to an increasing literacy fuelled by educational systems that taught the ideals of the ‘New Nationalism’ and emphasized patriotism. Such papers depended very heavily on telegraphed reports. This plus the ‘New Imperialism’ led most nation-states into what eventually became known as ‘jingoism’. Famously, such forces are held to have allowed William Randolph Hearst to use his *New York Journal* to push America into the Spanish–American War of 1898. Magazines were often just as jingoistic, though less dependent on the immediate reporting of news from far places around the globe. The most circulated and influential magazine in Imperial Germany, the sophisticated illustrated weekly, *Simplicissimus*, spent a vast amount of time arguing for Germany’s right to a ‘place in the sun’ while simultaneously recognizing the likely costs of such a policy of imperial expansion vis-à-vis needed reforms at home. It was aggressively anti-British, depicting the British as decadent, unwilling to fight, and preferring to use mercenaries (Hugill 2008).

Although popular novels came into existence before the Victorian era a new form of novel emerged in the middle Victorian era, one global in character and informed by the technological changes of the period. The novels of Jules Verne are now thought of as science fiction, but such works as *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) were really technological romances set in a newly globalized context, rendered accessible to the average person by rapidly increasing literacy and the development of the mass media market. As the ‘New Imperialism’ emerged following the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 contemporaneously with rising literacy, a sub-genre of novel also emerged designed to produce strong group identification among teenage boys. Pioneered by British author G. A. Henty, this new style of novel was intensely patriotic and glamorized life on the imperial frontiers. Henty’s books, 122 in all, also sold in vast numbers in America, pirated by over 30 different American publishers (Arnold 1980). Henty wrote in the same style for the new weekly magazines, such as *Boys’ Own Paper*, and was widely imitated. Important American writers such as Edward Stratemeyer, who would eventually be responsible for over 3,000 children’s titles, adapted Henty’s sub-genre for America starting with his Old Glory Series, which focused on the first American venture into the ‘New Imperialism’, the Spanish–American War (Hugill 1999b).

New forms of entertainment, consumed weekly, also fostered group identity. Although large cities such as London had long enjoyed good access to a reasonable number of theatres, such entertainment catered largely to elites. The first true music hall appeared in London in 1852, and by 1878 London had 78 large music halls and some 300 smaller ones (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_hall, accessed 29 November 2010). Such a widely popular new style of entertainment spread rapidly, and most provincial British cities quickly developed music halls. British acts also carried the new-style theatre to America where it evolved into the more sexually

suggestive burlesque theatre (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burlesque>, accessed 29 November 2010). The British dancer, Lydia Thompson, introduced burlesque into America together with her British Blondes dance troupe in 1868. Much of the reason for the success of burlesque was simply that American cities were home to large numbers of single male immigrants in the late Victorian era.

Finally, team sports emerged to cater to more spatially constructed identities. Football was initially a public school game with highly variable rules that appealed mostly to its players, but British cities began to develop football for paying spectators in the 1850s. The rules were first standardized in 1863 with the formation of the Football Association (FA); by 1871, 50 clubs belonged to the FA. The first international was played between England and Scotland in 1872, and in 1888 the world's first football league was formed in Birmingham, led by Aston Villa. In America the first spectator sport at the city level was baseball, initially called 'townball' and played by amateurs from the 1840s on. The game grew explosively after the Civil War, when the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) was formed.

Cricket, significant as a game of imperial and English-speaking as well as local identities, followed a similar trajectory. County clubs began forming in 1839, although the first formal county championship was not held until 1890. The first recorded international match was played in 1844 between British North America and the United States. In 1859 a British professional team toured North America. International test cricket began between Britain and Australia in 1877, with South Africa joining in 1884 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_cricket, accessed 29 November 2010). Routine games at the global level were made possible only because of the regularization of travel by the steamship, just as national championships relied on the well-developed late Victorian rail network.

CONCLUSION

Thus far I have concentrated generally on the positive features of the Victorian time-space compression. People became more mobile and better connected, and many gained access to more and better food, goods, information, education, and social services. But there were also at least three darksides. The first came from the renewed, intensified 'New Imperialism' of the 1880s on. The world population was increasing rapidly, the period of free trade was over and, as long as resources still came largely from the organic world, the competition for territory was bound to intensify as a result of time-space compression. By 1901 the shape of the struggles for territory and resources that would engulf the post-Victorian world were becoming clear. Imperial Germany had announced a clear naval challenge to Britain, and Britain had begun to restructure its global security arrangements by abandoning its long policy of 'splendid isolation' and, in particular through the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, firming up an early version of the Anglo-American alliance that dominates global geopolitics to this day. The darkside here was the hundreds of millions of deaths that accompanied three global struggles involving the Anglo-American alliance: with Imperial Germany in the First World War; Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in the Second World War; and the Communist powers

in a Cold War that had fewer battle deaths but an appalling number of civilian deaths. The great architect of Anglo-American geopolitical thinking, Halford Mackinder, saw this dark future with some clarity in 1904 (Mackinder 1904; Hugill 2009c; Kearns 2009).

A second darkside of time-space compression was the expansion of the Eurasian disease pool into the last region of the world it had not reached, Australasia and the Pacific Islands. The ships of the early 1800s were slow enough that the most virulent Eurasian diseases died out before European ships reached the area. By the mid-1800s that was no longer true. When smallpox reached the Hawaiian Islands in the 1850s, it killed over 50 per cent of the indigenous population in the first two weeks. At almost the same time, improved transport allowed leprosy, Hansen's Disease, to also reach the islands – the Hawaiians called it 'the Chinese disease' (Tayman 2006). By the late 1800s the populations of Australasia and the Pacific Islands were in demographic free-fall, seemingly headed for extinction by Eurasian diseases.

The third darkside was the renewal of the trade in humans. Victoria came to the throne after slavery had ended in her empire and after the global trade in humans had been largely suppressed for some 30 years. But steamships could move large numbers of contract labourers, usually from India and China, quickly and cheaply, and they became the norm in plantation agriculture by the end of the 1800s. This later Victorian trade in contract labour was little more than a reborn slave trade (Hoerder 2002). This reborn trade was part of the intensifying pressure for agricultural resources, a pressure that pushed some imperial powers into brutal repression of any indigenous groups who resisted integration into the intensifying imperial structure caused by time-space compression. The use of concentration camps by the British to control the rural Boers of South Africa during the Boer War, though not a deliberate policy of extermination, set a dismal precedent for a not too distant future. German troops would massacre some 75,000 Herero and Nama peoples in German Southwest Africa in 1907–08, in the twentieth century's first attested incident of genocide, when they resisted planting cotton needed by German textile mills (Hugill 2008: 12–13).

For all the problems it created, the accelerating time-space compression of the Victorian era powerfully and positively changed the human condition. Both the quantity and quality of the food supply improved vastly, in part through the opening up of new lands, in part because of better transport, in part because of better information flows about markets. Raw materials for industry could now be moved around the planet with ease, as could the goods industry could now turn out. Labour, too, could move rapidly from regions of surplus to places their labour was needed, and people who migrated no longer lost contact with friends and relations. More efficient bureaucracies ensured more efficient industries, and the emergence of states with increasingly strong abilities to provide for the well-being of their citizens. Although much of this hinged on better transportation overland by railroad and over the seas of the world by steamship, what bound the whole system together in the most startling acceleration of all was *sui generis*: the ability to move information at the speed of light through the global network of telegraphs installed by largely British capital and engineers.

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CHAPTER FOUR

PATTERNS OF INDUSTRIALISATION



Emma Griffin

When William Aitken, a one-time factory worker and agitator for political reform, sat down to write his memoirs in the late 1860s, he considered himself to be living in ‘the most industrial age the world has ever seen’. Aitken, like most Victorian commentators, did not speak in terms of ‘industrialisation’ – the word and the concept are both twentieth-century creations. Nonetheless, the absence of a vocabulary of industrialisation should not be interpreted as a failure to notice the profound changes that were restructuring the British economy, landscape and society during the nineteenth century. Some construed these changes in a positive light – as for example, did Aitken himself, who despite his earlier career as a reformer, later considered that capitalism had made ‘the desert blossom as the rose’; though many others took a considerably bleaker view (Aitken 1996). All, however, perceived themselves to be in the midst of a period of dramatic economic change, and were fully confident of Britain’s position as a world leader in the middle of the nineteenth century. However we interpret these changes, it is clear that the Victorian economy grew considerably in strength and size, and that this period was a pivotal moment in Britain’s transition from a pre-industrial to industrial economy. In this chapter we shall explore what ‘industrialisation’ actually was, and consider how the Victorian economy was affected by the process.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the Victorian economy is the sheer extent of growth that was attained, and although precise measures are difficult to obtain, a sense of this achievement can be demonstrated by looking at a wide range of economic indicators. The indices for industrial output, for example, reveal steady gains throughout the final three quarters of the nineteenth century. Between 1830 and 1860, Charles Feinstein has estimated that industrial output was expanding at a rate of 3.3 per cent per year – a rate of growth that was sufficient to produce a doubling of output in just 30 years (Feinstein 1978: 28–96). Matthews, Feinstein and Odling-Smee’s estimates for the second half of the century are a little more muted, yet still reveal substantial growth. They have estimated that manufacturing output increased at a rate of 2.6 per cent per year between 1856 and 1873, dropping slightly to 2 per cent per year between 1873 and 1913 (Matthews *et al.* 1982: Table 8.3, 228).

Furthermore, these buoyant rates of industrial growth had a favourable effect on the wider economy. Economists commonly use gross domestic product or GDP, which is defined as the market value of all the goods and services produced within the country in a year, in order to measure a country's economic performance. Between 1830 and 1860, Feinstein's figures suggest GDP grew at 2.5 per cent per year (Feinstein 1978: 28–96). Matthews *et al.* offer a slightly lower estimate of 2.4 per cent per year between 1856 and 1873, falling to 2 per cent per year between 1873 and 1913 (Matthews *et al.* 1982: Table 2.1, 22). Nonetheless, these were significant yearly increases, permitting the British economy to double in size between 1830 and 1860 and to double once more between 1860 and the end of Victoria's reign. Furthermore, this rise in GDP was well in excess of anything that the British economy had previously achieved, and thereby marked a departure from the existing pattern of growth.

The trends for industrial output and GDP are the most straightforward evidence for change, but they are not the only ways of measuring the performance of the Victorian economy. It is useful to contrast the progress of GDP with demographic trends and the real wage in order to establish whether economic growth was a simple consequence of population increase, as well as to assess how well the economy met the welfare needs of the population. As with the economy, the population exhibited strong positive growth throughout the nineteenth century, increasing at just over 1 per cent per year: these year-on-year increases were sufficient to cause the population to more than double over the period of Victoria's reign (Wrigley and Schofield 1981; Wrigley *et al.* 1997; Woods 2000: Table 2.1, 50). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the rate of population growth was slightly lower than the growth of GDP, which suggests that economic growth was not simply the consequence of a larger workforce. The discrepancy between the two series indicates that the productivity of each worker was improving, hinting at the possibility of an underlying restructuring of the economy.

One final way of measuring economic performance may be obtained by looking at the real wage. Charting the progress of the real wage requires information about the wages received by manual labourers and their cost of living, and it is notoriously difficult to measure with any degree of accuracy. Nonetheless, a number of estimates are unanimous in detecting a pronounced upward trend throughout the final three-quarters of the nineteenth century – the most recent estimates imply annual increases of somewhere between 1 and 1.5 per cent (Matthews *et al.* 1982: Table 6.5, 171; Feinstein 1998: Table 5, 648; Allen 2001: Table 5, 428; Clark 2005: Table A2, 1324–25). As real wages were rising more slowly than GDP, it implies that much of the extra wealth generated by industry during Victoria's reign was not filtering into the hands of those who worked hardest to produce it. Nonetheless, taken over the span of Victoria's reign, the rise in real wages produced sizeable gains in the living standards of the working classes. By the end of Victoria's reign the economy was able to feed, house and clothe the population far more comfortably than it had at the beginning, and this achievement is yet more remarkable when it is recalled that the population was also much larger. Thus not only was the economy providing a better standard of living for the people, it was doing so for a considerably larger number as well.

Across a wide range of measures it is possible to demonstrate the Victorian economy attaining higher rates of growth than had been known in the eighteenth century and before. Yet it is not simply the rate of growth that was impressive during the nineteenth century: no less important than the overall pace of growth was the change in its nature. Economic growth was not, after all, a uniquely Victorian phenomenon. Historians of medieval Britain have sketched out a period of sustained expansion between the eleventh and the mid-thirteenth century; further gains were made over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well (Snooks 1994: Figure 3.3, 65). Yet no matter what advances were made during these earlier periods of prosperity, they were never sufficient to bring about significant improvements in living standards. The limited nature of economic progress prior to industrialisation can be grasped by considering Gregory Clark's estimates of the craftsman's real wage over the six centuries between 1200 and 1800 (Clark 2005: Table A2, 1324–25). His figures indicate sizeable fluctuations in the real wage over the period, yet no long-term increase. At the end of the period, a builder's wage bought him little more in the way of food, housing and clothing than had been enjoyed by his mediaeval ancestors, leaving large numbers eking out a precarious living on the margins of a decent existence. Why had economic growth not resulted in any substantial gains in living standards? The difficulty was that earlier periods of economic growth had always given rise to demographic growth; so although the economy was considerably larger in 1800 than it had been in 1200, so too was the population. The outcome was an economy capable of feeding larger numbers, but not able to feed them very much better (Goldstone 2002).

At some point during the nineteenth century, the economy broke out of this older cycle of limited growth, and sustained improvements in living standards were established: by the century's end the value of the real wage was three times above its value in 1800 and wages were higher than at any previous point in history. Not only did the real wage steadily increase over the nineteenth century, but these increases were maintained and extended in the years that followed: by the end of the twentieth century real wages had risen a further fourfold (Clark 2005: Table A2, 1324–25). In this respect, the nineteenth-century economy was behaving in a way that was fundamentally different to the way it had behaved in the past. Although the population was continuing to expand, economic growth was now outstripping population growth by a comfortable margin, giving rise to a prolonged upward trend in living standards. The past two centuries have seen material gains for every man, woman and child that were simply unimaginable for earlier generations, and in this respect the achievements of the Victorian economy stand out as an event of great historical significance.

It is in this context that we should situate the economic slowdown of the 1870s and 1880s, sometimes labelled the Great Depression, and which has attracted considerable attention from both contemporaries and historians. By the end of the century it seemed plain to most informed commentators that Britain had slipped from its glorious mid-century pre-eminence. Most recent studies, however, have been considerably more positive about economic progress during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, concluding that Britain's late Victorian decline was relative rather than absolute, the consequence of industrialisation spreading to the rest of Europe rather than of deficiencies within the British economy.

Certainly taking the longer term view, it is not accurate to characterise the late nineteenth century as a period of economic decline. The rate of increase of GDP may have slowed slightly, and was exceeded in many neighbouring nations, but the overall trend continued upwards and formed part of a much longer period of largely unbroken growth in national wealth and living standards (Crafts 1983: Table 1, 389). Industrial economies are ever haunted by cycles of boom and bust: yet at the same time, and in contrast to pre-industrial economies, the long-term trend of economic growth continues upwards and each generation enjoys a higher standard of living than its predecessor (Feinstein 1992; Supple 1994; Floud 1981).

It is surely for this reason that the concept of industrialisation has proved so enduring throughout the twentieth century. Whilst critics have sometimes questioned whether the changes were sufficiently rapid to justify being labelled an 'industrial revolution', scholars have largely agreed that at some point between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries a step change in the economic order took place, a change so fundamental that a special vocabulary is appropriate (Cannadine 1984; Coleman 1992; Berg and Hudson 1992). This was not simply growth, but the creation of a new economic system capable of sustained growth over the long term. And given the historical significance of this development at the heart of the economy, it is necessary to consider in greater detail how and why this restructuring occurred.

There are many different pathways to industrialisation: different nations will follow their own route according to their own unique historical development. In Britain, however, we must look primarily to coal in order to explain how the old pattern of limited growth was broken and the modern era of prolonged economic expansion established. In the early nineteenth century, burning coal was one of a number of ways of providing the energy needed for cooking, heating and powering industry, and the profound significance of coal can be most easily grasped by thinking about the alternatives and their limitations. If energy is not derived from coal, it might instead be harnessed from the winds or from rivers by means of windmills and waterwheels. Alternatively, energy may be obtained from the soil, either directly through the burning of wood, or more indirectly, by the muscles of humans or animals – in this instance, their energy is provided by consuming food or fodder produced by the land. Yet the energy that can be obtained from wind, water and the soil cannot be increased indefinitely. Improvements to the efficiency of agriculture, for example, might lead to higher yields, but the amount of energy that can be obtained from a given landmass is ultimately fixed and cannot be extended continuously using traditional farming techniques. Likewise, innovations in the design of waterwheels might lead to some rise in the energy obtained from waterways, but no matter what ingenious refinements are made, the energy contained in Britain's rivers is also fixed and cannot be substantially increased simply through modifications to the waterwheel. And these energy constraints effectively placed a cap on the extent of economic growth that could be achieved. As Tony Wrigley has explained, 'as long as the land remained the principal source not only of food but also of almost all the raw materials used in manufacture, it was inevitable that the productivity of the land should set limits to possible growth' (Wrigley 2006: 476; Wrigley 1990).

When industry began to burn coal rather than wood, the age-old constraints that had placed a ceiling on the development of industry in previous centuries were at a stroke removed. By digging under the soil, vast new expanses of economic possibility were opened, permitting a long-term rise in output on a previously unimaginable scale. No longer were the needs of industry and human sustenance in competition for the same set of resources: the coal mines could provide fuel for industrial processes, cooking and heating, and the land could be used to grow crops to feed the growing population that an expanding industrial sector required. Though coal is of course itself a finite resource, in the context of the period, and in comparison with the fuel sources that had preceded it, the opportunities it presented for economic growth were seemingly endless.

The switch to coal was not, however, accomplished in the short span of Victoria's reign, and emphasising the centrality of coal forces us to consider the chronology of British industrialisation. Coal already made a substantial contribution to Britain's energy needs in the early nineteenth century, and had indeed done so for several centuries. As early as 1700, coal provided about one half of all the energy consumed in England and Wales – animals, humans and firewood provided the bulk of the rest, with wind and waterpower making only a marginal contribution. Coal consumption rose steadily over the eighteenth century and provided three-quarters of England and Wales' energy by 1800; it continued to rise in the following century and provided over 95 per cent of the nations' energy needs by 1900. At the same time as the contribution that coal made to supplying Britain's fuel needs rose, the overall quantity of energy consumed also underwent a sustained increase; yet once again, this was a process that had begun well before the Victorian period. Energy use doubled from approximately 33 gigajoules (GJ) per capita in the 1720s to 67 GJ per capita in 1837, and then more than doubled again to approximately 150 GJ per capita over the course of Victoria's reign (Warde 2007: 123–38). Clearly, then, both the switch to coal and the rise in energy use were long and drawn-out events that had been underway for at least a century prior to the 1830s. Given the long taproots of change, it is important to determine in what respects, if any, Victorian coal consumption departed from existing trends.

It is possible to shed light on this problem by looking at the uses to which coal was put. Industry was not, after all, the only consumer of coal. Coal was also used extensively within the home for cooking and heating, and so long as the population continued to expand, the demand for coal was sure to rise. At the start of the eighteenth century, just over half of Britain's coal consumption was for domestic use: industry and mining consumed 45 per cent (waste comprised the rest). By 1830, these proportions had only shifted modestly: industry and mining now consumed 55 per cent of Britain's coal output, whilst 40 per cent was used within the home (Flinn 1984: Table 7.13, 252). Of course, as coal consumption had also increased dramatically over this period the amount of coal that was consumed by industry had also risen considerably. Nonetheless, the structure of coal use had not undergone significant change, and this suggests that although the economy was growing, it was still continuing to function in the traditional way. In the following 70 years, however, the proportion of coal put to domestic use fell sharply away, dropping to 18 per cent, whilst that used in industry and mining rose to

73 per cent. The historian of the nineteenth-century coal industry, Roy Church, has concluded: 'It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of coal to the British economy between 1830 and 1913' (Church 1986: Table 1.3, 19, 758). So whilst the use of coal was not in itself a new phenomenon, the application of coal to industry and manufacture nonetheless gained considerable momentum in the Victorian era.

Yet indicating the dramatic rise in industry's coal consumption during the nineteenth century quickly raises another question. As the coal had always existed, and was indeed widely used in British homes and in some sectors of industry, what caused the sudden increase in industrial coal consumption during the nineteenth century? Or to put the question another way, why had so many manufacturers been so slow to take advantage of the nation's relatively cheap and abundant coal reserves? The answer to this lies in understanding the technological challenges often inherent in replacing one source of fuel with another. Fuel sources are not necessarily interchangeable. Nineteenth-century manufacturers were accustomed to using animals, humans, windmills, waterwheels or charcoal to provide the energy needed to process raw goods into manufactured articles; their technologies had all been developed to use a particular type of fuel. The humble spinning wheel was designed to be powered by hand or foot. No amount of coal was going to improve the speed or efficiency of its operation; an entirely new technology was required before coal could be used to spin yarn. And it was for this reason that manufacturers were often slow to exploit domestic coal reserves (Allen 2009). One of the great achievements of the Victorian economy, therefore, was the development of a series of technological breakthroughs, many of which were in essence technologies designed to replace the power provided by muscle, wind and water with coal.

Inevitably, the switch from organic sources of energy to coal was well underway by the onset of Victoria's rule, and in some industries the switch had been largely completed. In the iron industry, for example, both the smelting and refining processes had moved from charcoal to coal during the eighteenth century. Smelting had been transformed with Darby's method of coke-smelting developed in the 1700s and becoming widespread in the second half of the century. Similarly in the sphere of iron-refining, the Woods' brothers 'potting' process and Henry Cort's 'puddling' process were effectively techniques that refined iron using coal rather than charcoal (Hyde 1974: 190–206). Together these inventions led to a very sharp rise in the industry's coal consumption, and a corresponding rise in output. According to one set of estimates, less than half of 1 per cent of Britain's coal was being used by the iron industry in 1750; this had risen to nearly 20 per cent by 1830 (Flinn 1984: 252). At the same time, output rose very sharply: the 28,000 tons of pig iron produced in the 1750s increased 70-fold over the following century, with output well in excess of two million tons by 1850 (Riden 1977: 442–59). Clearly, without these eighteenth-century achievements the Victorian economy would have looked very different indeed.

Yet the iron industry's heavy reliance on coal in the early nineteenth century was highly unusual, and most of the rest of the manufacturing economy continued to get by with the traditional fuel sources: charcoal, wind-power and water-power, and the muscles of animals and humans. Even the cotton industry, which

had witnessed some spectacular new inventions in the late eighteenth century – Hargreaves’ spinning jenny, Arkwright’s water frame and Crompton’s mule – was almost entirely powered by traditional fuel sources. The spinning jenny was operated by hand and the waterframe and mule were both driven by waterpower not coal. Certainly the industry achieved very significant growth prior to the Victorian period on the basis of these inventions, yet continued expansion of the cotton industry depended upon the use of coal-fired steam engines, and these did not come on stream until the 1820s and 1830s. S.D. Chapman’s estimates suggest that the industry moved quite slowly over to steam power down to 1820 and switched from waterpower to coal more rapidly thereafter: by 1835 coal was providing power for three-quarters of the cotton industry in England and Scotland (Chapman 1987: 19).

Over the Victorian era, other elements of cotton manufacture followed the spinning sector in switching from hand-powered, domestic production to steam-powered factory production. The weaving of the spun threads into fabric had traditionally been performed by men at hand-powered looms, though with the advantages of powered machinery so evident in the spinning industry, cotton manufacturers held high hopes that machines might also replace human labour in the field of weaving. A series of power looms developed in the early nineteenth century led to the gradual realisation of these hopes (Timmins 1993: 157–59). With the invention of Richard Roberts’ power loom, patented in 1822, powered weaving began to replace handloom weaving, and although the demise of handloom weaving was protracted, the triumph of the power loom was largely complete by the 1860s (Lloyd-Jones and Lewis 1998: 41). The printing of coloured designs on the finished cloth was revolutionised with the invention of mechanised printing processes at the end of the eighteenth century. As with the new spinning machines, roller printers were initially powered by hand or by waterwheel, though within decades manufacturers were switching to roller printers powered by steam. Finally, the endpoint of cloth manufacture – the turning of manufactured cloth into clothes, hats and accessories – moved from hand to machine with the invention of the sewing machine in the 1850s (Cooper 1968). Like many of the great textiles inventions, the sewing machine was initially powered by hand or foot and it took considerable inventive endeavour before manufacturers found ways of harnessing modern sources of power to the new technology. It was only at the very close of the century that the Singer Manufacturing Company patented electric sewing machines for commercial use, paving the way for a mass ready-made clothing industry.

Although few industries were transformed over the nineteenth century by quite the same extent as the cotton industry, the spread of steam was not confined to cotton. From about the 1830s, steam engines began to proliferate throughout the rest of the textile industry (woollens, worsteds, silks, linen) and beyond. By 1870, the textile industries combined consumed only about one-third of the power used in British industry. As over 90 per cent of power by industry was provided by steam engines in 1870, it follows that the remaining two-thirds of steam power was being consumed by a very wide range of industries outside the textile sector (Kanefsky and Robey 1980: Table 5, 176; Kanefsky 1979). Few sections of the manufacturing economy were entirely untouched by steam power by this point:

iron and brass production; metalworking; machine building; leatherworking; chemicals; food processing; papermaking; brickmaking; and construction were just some of the nation's major industries heavily reliant on coal. A few of these had switched to coal in the eighteenth century, but for most the switch was delayed until the coming of the steam engine in the nineteenth century. Despite a few early precursors, therefore, the nineteenth century nonetheless marks a departure from existing trends in terms of both the quantity of coal used and the pervasiveness of its use throughout the manufacturing economy.

A look at some small nineteenth-century businesses illustrates how deeply coal power had penetrated the economy, as well as highlighting once more the ability of coal to usher in new rates of economic growth. In London in the late 1820s William Hollingsworth and his family set up a small business that he described as 'braid making by machinery'. According to Hollingsworth, he made the machines, his mother and sisters worked them, and an 'Irishman turning a flywheel' provided the power needed to run them. By the time the family were operating 20 machines, however, the power provided by the Irishman was clearly deemed insufficient, for at that point the family decided to move their business to a 'workshop with steam power' in Clerkenwell. The combination of improved machinery and coal power enabled the family to rapidly increase output, lower their costs, and increase their profit margin: they started by selling their braid at 14s per gross and within a few years were selling it at 1s 9d per gross (Hollingsworth n.d.: 4–5). Meanwhile, over in West Bromwich, just outside Birmingham, John Hughes recorded the gradual shift from traditional power sources to coal power during a working life devoted to gun manufacture. In 1849, when he was nine years of age, Hughes started work at a workshop manufacturing bayonets and gun parts. The bayonets were 'sent to a pool and were ground by water power from the Tame' before they reached the workshop: in the workshop the men used foot lathes and hand presses, 'no power at all at that time being used', and the men worked in light provided by candles. The grinding of the bayonets moved to steam-powered grindstones in Oldbury in the 1840s, but the finishing of the guns continued to be powered entirely by hand for a further two decades. In about 1870 a large engine was built that powered the machinery in both Hughes' and several other neighbouring workshops (Hughes n.d.). The transition from hand power and candlelight to steam power and gaslight was not rapid. It took Victorian engineers and craftsmen several decades of invention and experimentation to develop steam-powered machines that could manufacture complex gun parts with the same precision as the existing hand-operated tools, but as coal could be bought far more cheaply than a skilled craftsman, there was a very clear incentive for this inventive endeavour.

One final example from the milling industry illustrates the root and branch restructuring of the manufacturing economy that occurred during the Victorian period. Thomas Willson and his son Robert were the owners and operators of a windmill in the Lincolnshire village of Huttoft. In the early nineteenth century their business depended entirely on organic fuel sources: the mill was, of course, powered by the wind, and the Willsons transported their ground flour by horse and cart or, when the quantities were too small to require the cart, by an 'old donkey'. Thomas Willson rebuilt his mill in the 1840s; the new mill was larger and better situated, but used essentially the same technology as had been used in the Middle



Figure 4.1 *Cyfarthfa Rolling Mills at Night* by Penry Williams, 1825.
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Merthyr Tydfil

Ages – as his son recollected ‘Steam Flour Mills were not thought of in Villages at that time’ (Willson 1994). In the following decades, however, Willson found it expedient to purchase a portable steam engine so as to help keep the grindstones turning when the wind was slack. By the 1870s, during a second redevelopment of the windmill, the family decided to build a mechanically powered mill driven by steam rather than wind. By the end of the century all of the windmills in the region had fallen into disuse, and Thomas’ son Robert lamented ‘How Much More picturesque the Country looks with the Wind Mills in full Swing’. But the differences between windmills and steam-powered mills went far beyond their beauty. Concentrating the grinding of flour in large urban roller mills and distributing flour and grain by rail rather than horses and donkeys offered a more reliable and far cheaper way of providing a basic commodity to a growing population. The Willsons’ milling business provides one more illustration of the ways in which Victorian producers used coal power to raise output and lower the cost of their goods. Furthermore, the real interest of the changes described by William Hollingsworth, John Hughes and the Willsons lies in their typicality. When it is appreciated that such adaptations from hand and wind power to coal power were replicated across the economy in industries large and small, the achievements of Victorian industry can be fully understood.

Piecing together the themes that we have looked at in this chapter it becomes possible to construct a coherent account of Victorian industrialisation. Industrialisation was effectively a combination of two separate forces – new fuels and new technologies. Coal had always lain under British soil, but it could only be made economically useful by the application of invention. Furthermore, whilst this process was certainly underway during the eighteenth century, it gained considerable and unstoppable momentum during the nineteenth, owing largely to refinements to the steam engine that made it possible to use coal in almost every sector of industry. Framing economic growth in this way also establishes industrialisation as a uniquely Victorian achievement. Coal, new technologies and economic growth had all existed at other times and other places. Yet this was the first time not simply in British history, but in world history, that any society had comprehensively restructured its production processes across the manufacturing economy so as to replace the power provided by wood, wind and muscles with the far more abundant energy contained in fossil fuels.

It is possible to develop this account of industrialisation further by looking at patterns of economic change in other parts of nineteenth-century Europe. In the 1830s, the only economy on mainland Europe to bear much resemblance to that of Britain was that of Belgium; by the close of the century, that was clearly no longer the case. In much of Europe, and in Western Europe in particular, industrialisation was continuing at a considerable and (from the British perspective at least) alarming pace. Although the precise pathway to industrial status was unique in each case, it is possible to discern a strong correlation between industrialisation and the emergence of new sources of inorganic fuel. One after another, Britain's continental neighbours acquired industrial status as each nation found new ways of exploiting its natural resources so as to increase the amount of energy available for production.

In some countries, industrialisation closely mirrored the British experience. Belgium, for example, had a very similar resource endowment to Britain, and for this reason Belgian industrialisation looked very similar to its British counterpart. The first quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed rapid development in its coal-mining regions of Hainaut province around Liège, with the growth of coal mining, iron production, machine building and glass making. By the 1840s Belgium had clearly emerged as the most industrialised nation on the continent (Greefs *et al.* 2005: 210–27; van der Wee 1996: 64–77). Germany likewise possessed favourable coal deposits, and although industrialisation here was delayed until the second half of the nineteenth century, once the process began it bore strong similarities to the British experience. The Ruhr valley, situated in Westphalia and Rhineland (Prussia), possessed extensive deposits of high-grade coal. This coal had been extracted since the thirteenth century at least, but in such small quantities that the region remained strongly rural in character even as late as 1850. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the region's minor coal industry entered a period of massive expansion, with coal output increasing by at least 33 times in just 50 years (Jordan-Bychkov 1973: 292–94). Within a few decades, the region's small rural mines, mostly employing primitive techniques and a few hundred men, had been transformed into very large establishments employing thousands of men and using expensive mining machinery. The increase in coal output led in turn to the rise of

the iron and steel industries and a very marked growth in the use of steam engines. The number of steam-powered machines in Rhineland-Westphalia grew from 650, with a total of less than 19,000 horsepower (HP) to nearly 12,000 with a combined HP of 380,000 in the quarter-century between 1849 and 1975 – a 20-fold increase in the power derived from steam (Blackbourn 1997: 178). And as industry expanded, so the population flooded in. The population of the Ruhr valley swelled from some 200,000 in 1831 to nearly three million just 80 years later (1910), and in the process some of the Ruhr's small towns – Duisburg, Dortmund, Bochum, Essen and Oberhausen – were transformed into large industrial cities. By the late nineteenth century, the region easily eclipsed Belgium as the most important industrial centre on the European continent (Jackson 1997: 2–14). As in Belgium, German industrialisation departed from the British model in several respects, occurring both later and significantly more rapidly, yet strong continuities were also evident. The amount of energy available to German manufacturing was vastly increased by exploiting the nation's rich coal reserves, and this shift from organic to inorganic fuels largely underpinned the nation's rapid economic growth in the second half of the nineteenth century (Pierenkemper and Tilly 2004; Tilly 1991).

The contrasting experiences of France and Italy further underscore the importance of finding new ways to increase the amount of energy available for production if industrialisation is to occur. Neither France nor Italy was well endowed with coal. France's coal deposits are rather meagre and inconveniently situated, and Italy possesses no coal at all. This rendered coal a precious and expensive commodity, and, by the same token, the coal-powered steam engine a rather unattractive prospect. Inevitably, therefore, industrialisation in these two nations diverged considerably from the British experience. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, European and American scientists and engineers were developing a new power source – electricity – and in switching to this, France and Italy largely bypassed the coal-driven steam engine (Goodman and Honeyman 1992: 196–202). Electricity can be generated by many means – coal, oil, tides, rivers, sunlight, wind, or (more recently) nuclear reaction – and is therefore a potentially more accessible fuel source to coal-poor nations. It was certainly more attractive to France, and underpinned the nation's steady acceleration in industrial growth from the end of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of the First World War. Hydroelectricity provided cheap energy for the northern Alps, the Rhone valley and Lyon, and promoted the growth of a number of new, energy intensive industries: paper-making; the automobile and aeronautical industries; the chemical and electrical industry, electrochemistry and electrometallurgy industries (Caron and Bray 1979: 144–46; de Planhol, Claval and Lloyd 1994: 370–71; Horn 2006). Likewise in Italy, although coal could certainly be bought on the international market, its price was so high that it offered few solutions to manufacturers seeking to expand production. Industrialisation here was largely delayed until the early twentieth century, after which it spread decisively and rapidly, albeit unevenly, throughout the country. As in France, electricity provided the key to this development. In 1890, the electricity industry provided 11 million kWh of energy; by the outbreak of the First World War, this had climbed to two billion and was on a par with the levels of electricity production in Britain and France. Electricity provided the

fuel needed for the nation's increasingly successful steel, transport, engineering and electromechanical industries (Zamagni 1993: 36–43). There was, therefore, nothing special or defining about industrialisation in Victorian Britain: it was based upon exploiting coal not because of any qualities intrinsic to coal, but simply because coal was relatively cheap and abundant in that country. Nations with a similar resource endowment followed a similar path, whilst those without necessarily took a different route. The key to industrialisation was not coal *per se*, but the untapping of new sources of energy.

We have been thinking about the nature and causes of Victorian industrialisation. Before closing, however, it is important to consider the consequences of industrialisation. The combination of new fuels and new technologies led to significant changes in working patterns, lifestyles, landscape and social geography. Furthermore, whilst some areas were undoubtedly touched to a far greater degree than others, the reach of industrialisation was wide, and very few corners of Britain were left untouched by the process by the end of Victoria's reign. So let us in conclusion look at these effects and explore some of the myriad ways in which industrialisation permanently altered the fabric of British society.

Part of the difficulty evaluating the outcome of the industrial revolution is the sheer variety of different forms that industrial development took. Even confining our attention to those regions most obviously transformed by the growth of manufacturing, it is clear that considerable diversities existed, as new industries tended to cluster together, giving rise to discrete industrial regions each with their own unique characteristics. South Lancashire, for example, was dominated by the growth of the textile industry, cotton in particular. This in turn led to the rise of several large and medium-sized towns – Manchester, Preston, Blackburn, Burnley, Rochdale, Wigan, Oldham, Stockport and Bolton. With the proliferation of steam in the second quarter of the century, production became concentrated in large factories, giving rise to a uniquely large, urban, factory workforce, unprecedented in both British and world history. More than anywhere else, this region was transformed by the emergence of strikingly new working patterns in mills and factories, with a clear separation between work and home, the introduction of a working day with the hours set by the factory owner and not the worker or the weather, and a large female population trading unpaid domestic work for wages outside the home (Timmins 1998).

In Birmingham and the Black Country, by contrast, the metal-working industries predominated. Metal working largely remained a cottage industry throughout the century, with production based in small domestic workshops and long reliant upon handheld tools, rather than automated machines. This created, in effect, an industrial district almost entirely lacking the great factories that have tended to dominate our ideas about the industrial revolution. Even as metal workers gradually moved over to steam-powered machines, working patterns changed only modestly: John Hughes, as we have seen, spent his working life in the same workshop; gas lighting and the building of a steam engine made his working conditions a little easier, but did not fundamentally alter the patterns or rhythms of his working life. Throughout this region, small, often domestic, workshops remained the most common working environment, and workmen continued to exercise considerable

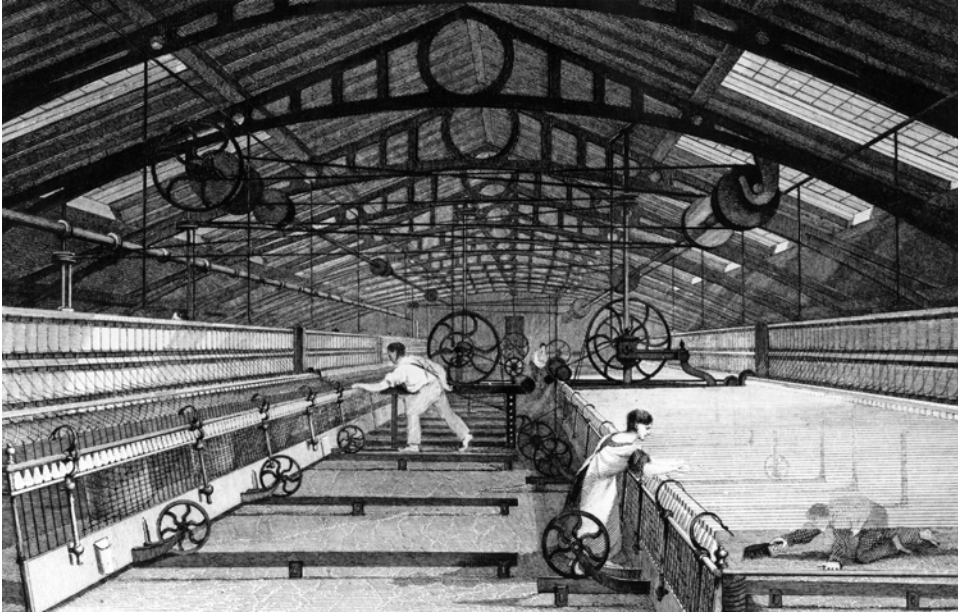


Figure 4.2 Mule Spinning, Edward Baines, *Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (1835)

control over the length of their working day and week (Rowlands 1987: 239; Hopkins 1998: 3–4).

In South Wales and the northeast, industrialisation took yet another form. As in Lancashire and the Black Country, there was a sizeable coal-mining industry: in addition, however, both regions also possessed iron deposits, which caused heavy industry to grow in tandem with the mining industry. These regions saw the emergence of a number of very large concerns, combining coal mines, iron mines, furnaces and refineries, employing thousands of workers across a wide range of production processes (Elliott 2004: 80). The Central Belt of Scotland combined many of these characteristics, with the development of the cotton and wool industries, as well as heavy industry in the form of coal mining, iron foundries, ship building and steel (Cooke and Donnachie 1998). In each of these areas, the occupational structure of the population was highly distinctive, with low numbers working in agriculture and high numbers working in manufacturing, mining and the service industries. At the same time, however, industrialisation was not a monolithic process; it could, and did, take many different forms.

No less significant than the evident diversities between Britain's manufacturing regions was the partial and incomplete nature of the industrial revolution. It is clear that different parts of Britain were affected by industrialisation to different degrees. Large parts of rural Britain did not experience its most obvious outward manifestations at all: they possessed no mines, few factories and no great cities,

and agriculture rather than industry remained the primary employer. At the same time, however, it is doubtful that such areas were left entirely untouched by industrialisation. Studies of occupations suggest that considerable change was occurring in rural areas throughout the nineteenth century, with a pronounced shift of workers out of agriculture and into the service sector of the economy. And even those remaining in agriculture frequently encountered significant changes to their working patterns, owing to the growth of large farms and the gradual introduction of harvesting, threshing and reaping machines. Furthermore, improvements to agriculture and transport all contributed to a lowering of the cost of food and helped to free labourers from the land to work in the new industries. By the Victorian era, the British economy was complex and interconnected, and the effects of rapid industrial growth in some districts inevitably rippled out to the rural regions as well.

Alongside the changes in working patterns that gradually occurred over the nineteenth century were significant shifts in population. Prior to the Victorian period, the south of England had been the most populous and prosperous part of the country. Defoe, writing in the early eighteenth century, had considered that the counties south of the Trent were ‘infinitely fuller of great towns, of people and of trade’. Throughout that century, most fairs took place south of a line drawn between the mouth of the Severn and the Wash, and the historian Gerard Turnbull has concluded that ‘the greater weight of economic activity still lay to the south’. But the movement of large numbers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries out of agricultural counties and into industrial ones reversed the economic significance of north and south. Turnbull has observed that population was moving toward the coalfields: ‘migrants flocked to jobs of all kinds, in traditional as well as new industries, on the coalfields. Population gathered there in concentrations far in excess of previous levels’ (Turnbull 1987: 539, 556). Migration to cities in the north and the Midlands, as well as to the rural-industrial hinterland around many large towns, created a strip of relatively thickly populated areas running from south Lancashire, across to west and south Yorkshire, and down through Nottingham and Leicester to the west Midlands. In Scotland, population congregated in the Central Belt, running from Greenock and Glasgow in the west across to Edinburgh in the east. Victorian industrialisation, therefore, produced a fundamental shift of population away from southern agricultural areas to northern urban and industrial areas, and significantly altered the human geography of Britain.

Alongside these demographic changes, developments in transport also had far-reaching consequences throughout the broader economy and society. Although recent attempts to measure the economic significance of the railways have suggested that their overall contribution to the growth of GDP was more modest than an earlier generation of historians sometimes assumed, it is nonetheless clear that the railways had a sizeable impact in many spheres of economic activity. The building of railways and locomotives, for example, called for large quantities of heavy materials, and thus provided a significant stimulus, or ‘backward linkage’, to the coal-mining, iron-production, engineering and construction industries (Ville 1994: 197–201). Railways, alongside other improvements to roads and waterways, helped to reduce transaction costs, which in turn lowered the costs of goods: the

distribution and sale of perishable goods such as meat, milk, fish and vegetables were transformed by the emergence of the railways, giving rise not only to cheaper produce in the shops but also to far greater variety. Furthermore, the emergence of the railways encouraged the development of new ways of doing business. From the outset, railway companies were unusually large by contemporary standards. In 1850, all of the largest firms listed on the stock exchange were railway companies: they controlled a vast amount of capital in the form of tracks, bridges, tunnels, stations and locomotives, and employed a large and dispersed workforce. As such, they posed formidable organisational challenges and triggered the creation of more sophisticated business practices. Finally, by improving personal mobility, the railways were a significant force for social change. Rail transport had originally been conceived as a way of moving coal and industrial goods. One of the first stretches of public railway – the Stockton to Darlington Railway opened in 1825 – had been intended as a coal line serving a number of the region's many collieries: passenger carriages were added to the service only as an afterthought. Yet of course, the railway operators quickly realised the potential market for railway travel, leading to an extremely rapid expansion in passenger services. The number of railway passengers trebled in just eight years between 1842 and 1850: traffic volumes roughly doubled in the 1850s and then doubled again in the 1860s (Gourvish 1988: 73). As one historian has noted: 'in terms of mobility and choice they added a new dimension to everyday life' (Aldcroft and Freeman 1983: 75). The railways brought not simply cheaper goods and services, they also promoted greater personal mobility and freedom. In a number of ways, therefore, the railways were integral to the emergence of an ever more complex commercial and social world.

Defining the British industrial revolution as a shift from an organic to inorganic economy provides a model for industrialisation that may be applied in other times and places. The precise path that each country takes to industrialisation will always be unique. Factories, small workshops and cottage looms; revolutionary inventions and small-scale technological improvements; cities, towns and villages – all will have their place in pathways to industrialisation. Whatever the exact form that industrialisation takes, underpinning the process is the harnessing of new sources of energy. These might be new resources (coal and oil), or new technologies (dams or nuclear power), or some combination of the two. In the process the age old conflict between human needs and industrial production is finally broken, and the door is pushed open for society to move forward into a new era of sustained economic growth. Emphasising the pivotal role played by coal not only provides a remarkably coherent and compelling explanation for Britain's industrial revolution, it also helps to explain the spread of industrialisation across the globe. Finally, when industrialisation is conceived in this way it also becomes clear that the industrial revolution, though it drew upon earlier achievements, was in fact a Victorian achievement. The eighteenth century was a period of sustained economic growth, but for most of this period manufacturers adhered to the old ways of doing things. It was only when a more widespread switch to coal occurred within industry that industrialisation can be said to have occurred, and this switch, as we have seen, was largely delayed until the Victorian era.

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CHAPTER FIVE

FREE TRADE AND ITS ENEMIES



Anthony Howe

The Victorian world was bitterly divided on many issues, but no conflict reverberated with greater intensity than that fought between ‘free trade’ and ‘protection’, whether in Britain, the Empire, or indeed Victorian America. Here were encapsulated in effect two rival cultures, one seeking to democratise consumption by the removal of tariff barriers, outward looking and global in perspective, emancipatory and libertarian in intent; the other, inward looking, distrustful of the perils of the global market, seeking reassurance within national structures. At the heart of this conflict as it first divided the metropolitan nation was the fate of the Corn Laws, whose eventual repeal in 1846 provided a defining moment in the Victorian world (Schonhardt-Bailey 2006). This antagonism derived from abstract economic reasoning on the nature of the market in the age of classical political economy, but it acquired huge overtones involving class, religion, morality, the constitution, the empire and foreign policy. Unsurprisingly perhaps this bitter contest over the merits of free trade was not substantially refought in Britain for the remainder of the nineteenth century, although it remained a major conflict within continental, imperial and American politics. By contrast, in Britain free trade became widely described as a unifying creed, a secular religion, part of the mental furniture of every Englishman (and woman) in a way that belied the divisions it evoked in the 1840s and again even more starkly in the 1900s. For the greater part of Victoria’s reign therefore free trade was a dominant ideology to which virtually all Britons publicly subscribed (Howe 1997; Trentmann 2008).

Yet below the apparently calm waters of orthodoxy, there survived a tributary of the protectionism defeated in the 1840s, occasionally bubbling to the surface, when a significant minority dissented from the majority in the guises of reciprocity, ‘fair trade’, or imperial preference (Brown 1943; Price 1999: 109–10). None of these alternative economic prescriptions appreciably dented the public ascendancy of free trade, although by the century’s end some of the self-confidence of free trade had evaporated, in part as a result of the failure of other nations to follow Britain in its pursuit of ‘universal’ free trade. In an ironic twist, the most important challenge to free trade came from within the ‘British world’, for the most influential dissentients from free trade were the ‘neo-Britons’ of the empire who had exercised

their powers of self-government to abandon the maternal pap of free trade for the more virile fare of protective tariffs. As the age of empire extended its tentacles, it was this colonial product that at the very end of our period was on the point of being re-imported into the 'free trade nation' in the form of Joseph Chamberlain's 'tariff reform' crusade (Zebel 1967; Green 1995: 27–56).

THE CORN LAW BATTLE

The Corn Laws, which became the centre ground of political debate in the late 1830s, had been imposed in 1815, partly in order to guarantee Britain's food supply, partly in order to recompense the landed interest for its contribution to winning the 'Great War' against revolutionary and Napoleonic France (Hilton 1977). They had met considerable initial opposition, but this had greatly subsided as wheat prices had fallen after 1815, reaching their lowest point before repeal between 1834 and 1836 (Howe 2007a). At the same time, freer trade was advanced in other spheres, as tariffs were lowered, reciprocity treaties negotiated and even the age-old Navigation Laws modified under the 'liberal Tory' minister William Huskisson in the 1820s. Even so, the Corn Laws remained the subject of much bitter parliamentary and elite debate, especially within the Tory party, where the divisions that were to split the party in 1846 had already been apparent in the tension between Huskisson (the 'Jacobin') and the agrarian Tory interest; had the Tories remained in power, and had Huskisson got his way, arguably the Corn Laws would themselves have been abolished in 1830 (Hilton 1977: 306; Howe 2004). Instead, parliamentary reform displaced the Corn Laws at the centre of public attention, although the extension of the political nation in 1832 expanded the potential for public interest in the Corn Laws. This was seen for example in anti-Corn Law associations formed in cities as diverse as Dundee in 1834 and London in 1836, but such agitations proved short-lived, localised and ineffective. This changed with the formation in the heartlands of the Industrial Revolution, of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association in 1837, reshaped in early 1838 as the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL), which in its short-lived existence became arguably the most effective pressure group in British history (McCord 1958; Pickering and Tyrrell 2000; Hilton 2006: 502–4; Howe 2008).

The essential background to the League's success lay in the commercial crisis that engulfed industrial Britain in the late 1830s, as exports upon which the economy increasingly depended came under pressure, following the collapse of Anglo-American trade in 1837. Suddenly, not only were many hundreds of thousands of workers facing unemployment and starvation, or entry into the dreaded, recently built 'Bastilles' (workhouses) but manufacturers, merchants and shopkeepers faced ruin. In this context many were ready to believe that the Corn Laws, by limiting imports, kept up food prices, and so threatened 'the people's bread'. At the same time, many held that high food prices kept up wages, and so limited the sales of British goods abroad; the more sophisticated argued also that Britain's failure to buy wheat abroad deprived foreign countries of the income they needed to buy British manufactured goods. For others, the Corn Laws, by holding back imports until prices reached high levels, produced a sudden increase in demand, adding instability to the monetary system and further jeopardising the



Figure 5.1 Samuel Bellin, 'Meeting of the Council of the Anti-corn Law League'.
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very survival of the state. These free trade arguments were ferociously countered by protectionist rebuttals that manufactures were overextended by foreign trade and had become speculative, over-dependent upon irregular foreign demand rather than upon reliable home demand. Rather, this should be boosted by supporting British agriculture, so removing the need for sudden foreign imports, while home demand with a prosperous agriculture would support limited manufacturing growth and would enhance political stability; protection was constitutional, whereas free trade, especially when promoted by an extra-parliamentary pressure group, threatened not only the landed interest (the 'permanent' national interest) but the constitution itself (Kadish 1996; Gambles 1999).

Such arguments had been the stock-in-trade of pamphleteers and periodicals for a generation, but the Anti-Corn Law League's success lay in turning the Corn Laws into a vast public debate in which the concrete 'facts' concerning prices, wages, exports and money, normally the preserve of economists and parliamentarians, became translated into a symbolic struggle between free trade and protection, industry versus land, town versus country, freedom versus oppression, self-reliance versus privilege, Saxon versus Norman, replete with religious overtones in which the people's scriptural 'daily bread' was withheld by a rapacious aristocracy. In this debate, the League successfully rallied many new men of wealth produced by the Industrial Revolution as seen in its hugely successful fundraising (£50,000 in 1842, £100,000 in 1844 and 1845, and a huge £250,000 fund in 1846), which bankrolled an immense free trade propaganda machine, as well as selective vote creation through the purchase of freehold land. But support came too from other

social groups, wholesale merchants, drapers and shopkeepers, dissenting ministers, clerks, warehousemen, and in some measure, working men; it also significantly enthused the wives and daughters of many middle-class homes (Morgan 2000; 2007: 138–43). On the other hand, the League's efforts were typically resisted by aristocrats, squires, farmers, lawyers, dons and clergymen, ship owners, and City of London merchants, especially those with imperial interests (Howe 1992). This social alignment was of course by no means so neat or complete, for most occupational groups were internally divided, with many landowners favouring repeal and many industrialists supporting protection, but it had sufficient plausibility to structure political debate and action.

This vigorous public debate percolated far beyond the 'official' political sphere, undoubtedly suffusing huge areas of daily life, literature, morality and religion. The battle over the people's bread, however tendentiously, put popular consumption at the heart of political debate (Gurney 2009). Slowly the League wrested the advantage against the competing moral economy of Chartism, convincing many that free trade would bring wide benefits for the people, and successfully refuting the claim that the League sought lower food prices only in order to lower wages. Significantly, alternative 'moral' economies, such as that of the nascent cooperative movement, supported repeal, as did the burgeoning temperance movement and its leader, Joseph Livesey, whose newspaper *The Struggle* became one of the most effective vehicles for free trade arguments. In other spheres, not only did the League take over popular London theatres for its own performances, but free trade was embraced in popular theatre (Pickering and Tyrrell 2000: 191–216; Brodie 2003). During the campaign the League leader Richard Cobden attained 'celebrity' status, while after his premature death in 1850 Sir Robert Peel became a revered hero of all classes (Read 1987; Morgan 2006).

Beyond their immediate campaign against the Corn Laws, free traders made wider claims for the liberating power of their ideology. Here slavery became an important issue, for to some in the early 1840s, it seemed free trade competed with or even undermined the anti-slavery cause by seeking to equalise duties on slave-grown and free-grown sugar. Significantly free traders won this battle, not only building up important links with the anti-slavery cause in the United States but in England successfully promoting free trade as the best means to advance abolitionism (Morgan 2009; Huzzey 2010). In the religious sphere, although the clergy of the Church of England proved largely but not entirely aloof from the anti-Corn Law movement, it was embraced by nonconformity, whose ministers were ready in large numbers to attend several of the League's conferences of ministers, while many chapels hosted anti-Corn Law meetings and petitioned for repeal. Here was a powerful expression of the 'Nonconformist conscience' in British politics. Religious equality became part and parcel of the free trade, anti-monopoly cause, as many who had supported the League moved seamlessly into campaigns for the disestablishment of the Church of England or the extension of non-sectarian education. Finally the 1840s saw the emergence of a vigorous peace movement, seeking to free men from their baser instincts, an essential part of which was the claim that the civilising force of free trade would naturally encourage peace between nations (Spall 1988; Howe 2010a). This proved not only a vital transatlantic connection but energised the European peace campaigns, enlisting many democrats

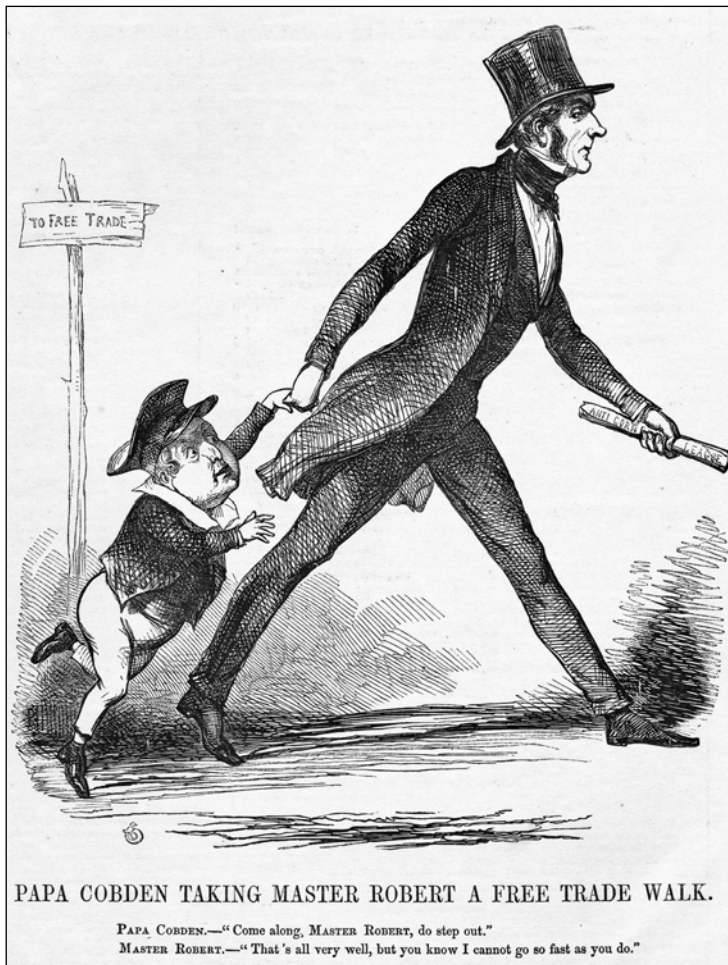


Figure 5.2 Repeal of Corn Laws and abolition of tariffs.
Richard Cobden (1804–65), an advocate of free trade, hurrying Robert Peel the prime minister, along the free trade path. Corn Laws were repealed in 1846.
Cartoon by Richard Doyle from *Punch*, London, 1845

and republicans. It was therefore the strength of free trade’s connections with wider, dynamic areas of national and international life that marked it out from its protectionist opponents. Popular protectionist rhetoric as well as the more sophisticated arguments of the *Banker’s Circular* and the Tory periodicals struggled to make converts beyond the agrarian, country banking and shipping interests (Macintyre 1989; Howe 1992).

Nevertheless, while the League had become as *The Times* famously put it, ‘The Great Fact’ (McCord 1958: 137), for all its outward success, it had only a limited ability to influence parliament. Hence when Sir Robert Peel eventually did come to propose repeal in January 1846, he did so arguably despite the League, rather

than because of it. For while the League in many ways had mobilised a dynamic Ricardian–Cobdenite vision of free trade, Peel’s reasoning reflected a competing but arguably more influential evangelical understanding of free trade, typical of the Christian economists such as Thomas Chalmers who had argued for the removal of the ‘artificial’ protection of the state from those whose immoral, speculative behaviour the ‘natural’, ‘God-given’ market would punish. Peel’s goal was therefore stability rather than unlimited industrial growth, primarily an attempt to guarantee sufficient food and employment to prevent hunger (and the danger of revolution) (Hilton 1988; 2006: 543–65). Already in 1842 Peel had introduced the sliding scale to even out oscillations in wheat prices, and successive budgetary changes suggested the state had little to fear from the removal of protection to the landed interest, while repeal would remove the strongest source of anti-aristocratic sentiment. In this perspective, Peel’s actions were defensive, adopting repeal in order to protect a ‘Troubled Giant’, as Britain the first industrialising nation began to face foreign competition in industrial goods, and seeking to help keep British agriculture competitive in the face of American and continental imports, necessary to feed Britain’s growing population. The timing of Peel’s actions was however not entirely of his choice – rather, as Wellington famously put it: ‘Rotten potatoes have done it all; they put Peel in his d-d fright’, with the failure of the Irish potato crop in 1845 and the imminence of famine in Ireland in 1846 (Gaunt 2010: 122). Repeal was largely irrelevant to the condition of Ireland, but it was Ireland that made the Corn Laws unsustainable in the mainland, especially as the coffers of the League threatened a further huge outpouring of literature illustrating the evils of aristocratic government. Repeal in 1846 also pre-empted a divisive general election in 1847, but it was passed only at the expense of dividing the Tory party, with two-thirds of the party opposing its leader and the bulk of support coming from the Whig/Liberal party.

‘VICTORIAN ORTHODOXY’

Despite the bitter divisions over the Corn Laws in 1846 the narrow parliamentary victory for free trade was not overturned, but repeal became the source of a comprehensive and long-lasting popular loyalty to free trade (Howe 1997). In part, this was the result of the ‘tournant des mentalités’ already seen in the 1840s, sustained by the steady diffusion of the language of political economy in the Victorian educational apparatus of classroom, Sunday school, mechanics institutes, libraries, and self-help societies. But even so, given the strength of protectionism in the 1840s, its rapid decline was in some ways surprising. Arguably it was accelerated by the continental revolutions of 1848, which helped make the world safe for free trade, in the sense that those who still outwardly upheld protection inwardly lost any resolution to implement it in office, or indeed to seek to build up any crusade for its return (Vincent 1978: xiv). Many MPs who had voted against the repeal of the Corn Laws remained in parliament after 1846. Some, such as Sir Charles Newdegate, awaited their opportunity to return to their old faith but most relapsed into silence; protectionism became a ‘lost cause’ that some, like Trollope’s Sir Orlando, forgot they had supported (cited in Howe 1997: 111). Outside parliament, the cause also paled as the sometime protectionist MP George Young, with his friends in the

shipyards, unconvincingly stirred Chartist embers in the East End, while the Chartist leader O'Connor stood on the same platform as Cobden, proclaiming his support for free trade (Howe 2010a). Here the general election of 1852 proved decisive in revealing the absence of any widespread demand for a reversal of 1846. Thereafter, the 'golden age of agriculture' and the failure of protectionist predictions of ruin ensured that the debate over free trade did not reignite in the countryside before the onset of the 'Great Depression' in 1873. By then, the agrarian interest had been prised away from protection as its bulwark.

While protectionism withered, the free trade vision of a new global order was consolidated (Bannerman and Howe 2008). In Britain, the logic of repeal was extended to shipping and the empire, as the Whigs responded to Cobden's call not to lose the 'free trade wind' and immediately sought to remove imperial preference with regard to sugar and timber, while abandoning all rights to impose differential duties in the colonies in favour of the mother country. Britain's was to be a free trade empire, although politicians omitted to ask whether this might not conflict with colonial autonomy. The 'free trade wind' also blew through the sails of British shipping, for, in 1849, after a fiercely fought parliamentary battle, the centuries old Navigation Laws were repealed (Palmer 1990). In addition, the rationalisation of the British tariff was now pursued by Peel's most ardent disciple, Gladstone, as his 1853 budget removed or reduced over a hundred duties, many of them on items of working-class consumption (Matthew 1979). Nevertheless, while such steps were unilateral, Britain's adoption of free trade had always been envisaged as a model for others to follow. Here progress was only sporadic until the 1860 Anglo-French Commercial Treaty, in which Britain and France sought not only to remove or lower their own tariffs but to remould the shape of Europe through the negotiation of interlocking free trade treaties. For some of its critics, the treaty was a return to reciprocity, but in the mind of its proponents, it was the logical complement to repeal and arguably an even greater step towards free trade than repeal of the Corn Laws (Dunham 1930; Gaston 1987; Howe 1997: 92–99; Iliasu 1971; Marsh 1999: 8–27; Nye 2007: 105–09).

As the 1860 treaty emphasised, the dissemination of 'free trade' had become part of Britain's providential mission. Already, in the wake of repeal Richard Cobden had toured Europe as 'the apostle of free trade', while the English debate and the League's example invigorated the European public sphere from Holland, to Spain, and even Russia (Taylor 1993). The Great Exhibition of 1851, opposed by protectionists, had acted as a celebration of free trade and its aspirations to a peaceful, civilised world order based on commerce and consumption. This was only the first of many exhibitions that acted as a form of cultural transfer of British or free trade values, emphasising the civilising value of commerce and the peace-enhancing tendencies of free exchange between nations (Kaiser 2005). Hence, at its most buoyant, 'free trade', or 'Free Trade' as it became hypostasised by the ultra-faithful, was not simply part of a 'British mission' but a universal panacea, an integral part of a genuinely cosmopolitan creed that briefly gripped Europe in the first mid-nineteenth-century age of globalisation, as men strove to break down the barriers of time and distance through railways, inter-oceanic canals, the telegraph and a host of ideas and organisations that emphasised international connectedness in a global order based on peace and free exchange (Howe 2007a).

This new world order impacted upon the literary imagination of authors as apparently local as Thomas Hardy, for whom the telegraph symbolised ‘cosmopolitan views and the intellectual and moral kinship of all mankind’ (quoted in Howe 1997: 121 n. 64) as well as the manifestly global Jules Verne. Free trade was as intimately linked with peace as tariffs were now proclaimed inherently linked to armaments and warfare. Supported by French socialists, British liberals and Italian nationalists, far from being simply the bagman’s creed, free trade held out quasi-utopian possibilities.

Yet free trade was at its most ambiguous and vulnerable when touted as part of British foreign policy. Cobden had been careful to emphasise that his mission was to the peoples of Europe, to convince them of the merits of free trade; this was a far cry from those who began aggressively to proclaim free trade as a part of Britain’s civilising mission, with the consequent gloss that free trade was a divine good that might be ‘imposed’ upon less civilised and less Christianised peoples, especially in Asia (Todd 2008). Free trade as a justification of territorial expansion was anathema to the Cobdenites, whose animus continued to be one that regarded empire with profound suspicion. Undoubtedly one of the most important legacies of free trade for nineteenth-century Britain was a lasting critique of empire and of balance of power diplomacy, however ineffectual this proved (Taylor 1957; Porter 1968). At the same time, the attachment to free trade of the British state ensured that the British Empire itself remained open to trade with all nations on equal terms; this became a strong desideratum in colonial negotiations, as Britain declined to ring-fence its empire by exclusive or protective tariffs. More generally, as worldwide tension increased in the later nineteenth century, Britain’s open market remained a ‘public good’, a considerable asset even in the eyes of traditionally minded diplomats (Platt 1968; Howe 2010b).

As the international possibilities of free trade receded, new doubts arose at home, but importantly, in the interim within Britain, far from being the creed of colourless cosmopolitans, free trade had seemingly woven itself into the very identity of the nation. For while free trade in corn was not, as its critics feared, the stepping stone to sweeping reforms in church, state and colonies, the fiscal policy of free trade, the reliance on tariffs for revenue alone, became an integral part of a quasi-social contract between the state and the people. By removing the hand of the state from the people’s food, free trade became a guarantee of popular welfare, uniting consumption with social justice, a message that lay at the heart of popular liberalism but which was not challenged by a Conservative Party now keen to dissociate itself from its protectionist past. More than this, the absence of tariffs became part of the knave-proof ‘British state’, distinguishing it from the lobbying and gerrymandering later associated with protectionist states. In place of the ‘constitutional’ discourse of protection, a new popular narrative of the constitution came to be written, in large part inspired by the repeal battle. The heroes of the League, Cobden and Bright (interestingly the aristocratic Villiers now tended to be forgotten), were cemented in the pantheon of the nation, while ‘The Manchester School’, once scorned by Disraeli, now tutored the nation. For however middle class an organisation, retrospectively the League’s claims to have represented the nation, to have protected the ‘People’s bread’, were widely accepted, even by former Chartists, many of whom became conspicuous supporters of free trade, as did the

vast bulk of Victorian trade unionists and their leaders. Beyond its economic language, free trade continued to express wider Victorian cultural identities. For example, free trade often became interlinked with Protestantism, to the extent that Lord John Russell even attempted to include guarantees for the rights of Italian Protestants as part of the Anglo-Italian commercial treaty in 1863 (Raponi 2009). Free trade was not only part of Britain's civilising Protestant mission but almost an aspect of manliness and character in the making of the 'Free Trade Nation'. Symptomatically, the epitome of Englishness John Bull was now arrayed in free trade clothing (Taylor 1992: 116–17, 122).

Beneath this wider gloss, however, free trade remained based on firm economic realities, the 'rational choice' for the world's most advanced industrial and financial power, suiting the City of London and Britain's pre-eminent export and shipping industries. But above all, free trade offered huge benefits to Britons as a nation of consumers, wedded to low food prices, a national good that would impose a major obstacle to any attempt to modify Britain's commercial policy. By the 1860s, the merest Protectionist grimace resurrected the rhetoric of consumers versus self-interested producers – for example, in the debates over cattle disease in the 1870s, in which urban consumers were presented as threatened by agrarian producers (Spain 1996). This loyalty to free trade was often passive but it also took on overt political shape in populist Liberal forms, seen best in the contemporary enthusiasm for the former League hero, John Bright, and the cult of Cobden following his death in 1865; in Liberal circles, the Cobden Club, founded in 1866, was for two decades responsible for a huge outpouring of literature vastly in excess of that which the later Fair Trade League ever produced, proclaiming the identity of the national interest, the open economy and the welfare of the masses. Here was an important vehicle for renewal of free trade loyalties, especially as the enemies of free trade increasingly foregathered outside the 'church of Cobden' (Sir Henry Maine, cited in Howe 1997: 116). Some critics of free trade claimed that the working class remained 'protectionist' in loyalties but successive increases in the working-class electorate were not matched by any sizeable increase of support for protection or 'Fair trade'. More than this, Britain developed a political culture that almost uniquely guaranteed the rights of consumers above those of producers, in a way which extended citizenship beyond the formal political nation, creating a new nation of 'citizen-consumers' (Howe 1996; Trentmann 2008). Nevertheless, however ineffectually, by the late 1860s, the first signs of a sizeable backlash against free trade were visible on the political landscape.

ENEMIES DISUNITED

The first signs of such a reaction came simultaneously in Lancashire and London, both based on concerns that Britain's adherence to free imports put her at a disadvantage as an exporter by removing any incentive for foreign countries to liberalise their tariffs. This became the essence of the case for 'fair trade', which would culminate in the establishment of the National Fair Trade League (NFTL) in 1881 but which at first went under the label 'reciprocity', with a short-lived Manchester Reciprocity Association established in 1869 (Brown 1943). In London, a more proletarian but equally short-lived body, the 'Revivers' sought retaliatory

duties on foreign manufactured goods (Bannerman and Howe 2008: 235–40). Both groups in a sense wanted or claimed to want more free trade rather than less, although slowly the evidence that more would not be forthcoming led to the argument for the modification and reconstruction of the British ‘free trade edifice’. Third there remained the ‘losers from free trade’, those specific groups that had suffered from the withdrawal of protection in the 1860 treaty, especially silk manufacturers (now centred on Macclesfield) and the ribbon manufacturers of Coventry. But so far these were mere whimpers of discontent, with the erstwhile bastion of protection, the landed interest, conspicuous by its absence.

It was, however, the experience of the 1870s that was to generate a far more searching examination of the strengths and limitations of British free trade, which by 1877 had given rise to an emerging alternative creed of ‘fair trade’. First, the vision of a ‘free trade Europe’, long the promised land of the Cobdenites, receded in the face of rising European tariffs (Zebel 1940). The ‘free trade Europe’, which had seemed on the verge of realization in the 1860s, had been undermined by civil war in America and unification wars in Europe, such that by 1875–76, tariffs were growing in appeal as a source of revenue to fund armaments and a means to promote ‘infant industries’ in Bismarckian Germany, the French Third Republic, and in Italy under the Left. In particular, while Anglo-French negotiations ran into the sands, as successive attempts to renew the 1860 treaty proved abortive (Dunham 1930; Howe 1997: 156–75; Marsh 1999: 103–9; 117–47), ‘fair traders’ now argued that Britain should impose duties on foreign nations that did not reciprocate with ‘free imports’. Second, while ‘Europe’ receded, ‘empire’ encroached. For by the late 1870s, numerous publicists had begun to speculate on the attractions of an empire united by tariffs and trade. The imperial *zollverein* was now constructed as the alternative to the ‘failure’ of free trade in Europe, with the dream of limitless exports of British manufactured goods to the far corners of the empire in exchange for endless food and raw materials. Third, free trade was now challenged by the impact of the supposed ‘Great Depression’, with agricultural prices pushed sharply downwards by cheap grain from the American prairies as well as refrigerated food, in part of course from the colonies. Much agrarian support for protection was in evidence in areas such as Lincolnshire by the late 1870s, although many ‘fair traders’ were keen to distance themselves from ‘old school’ agrarian protectionists, especially as they wished to see free imports of colonial food (Bannerman in Howe and Duckenfield 2008: 2–3). The Depression was by no means confined to agriculture but also hit several towns and industries now facing competition from European industrialization. Bradford, with its silk waste and worsted industries under threat, having failed to secure ‘freer trade’ with France, now became highly vocal in support of ‘fair trade’. In addition, although in many ways a special case, the sugar industry gave rise to some of the most effective arguments for abandoning ‘one-sided free trade’, especially as bounties on continental beet sugar enabled it to compete ‘unfairly’ with empire sugar. Iron and steel, especially in Sheffield, and at times in the Birmingham metal trades, proffered much support for fairer tariffs, especially the former when hit by ‘unfair’ American tariffs. Under the leadership of William Farrer Ecroyd, these groups slowly began to create a coherent ‘Fair trade’ message, arguing that Britain’s policy of free trade would only be reciprocated

by other nations if Britain herself imposed import duties both on foreign wheat and manufactured imports, while free imports from the colonies would strengthen the empire (on the federal model of the United States) and help prevent Britain's decline to the rank of third-rate power. This led for the first time since 1852 to an anti-free trade political presence, through meetings and tracts, and the spectacular election to parliament of Ecroyd in May 1881, encouraging the formation, on the model of the ACLL, of the National Fair Trade League. This wave of support did not snowball into a mass campaign, although it did contribute to the failure to renew the Anglo-French commercial treaty in 1881.

Despite this initial impetus, the NFTL was soon hamstrung, not least in 1882, when the Richmond Commission, the result of the agrarian agitation of 1879, produced a report that lent little comfort to the fair traders. Nor was the NFTL able by any means to replicate the ACLL: it lacked machinery and funds, aiming to raise £10,000 per year for five years, but spending at its peak in 1881 only £2,054 (Brown 1943: 26–28, 131). For public impact, it looked largely to the backbenches of the Conservative Party, while an element of intellectual sophistication was added to their cause by the rediscovery of the ideas of the German protectionist Friedrich List, whose *National System of Political Economy* was now introduced to an English audience by the Birmingham 'fair trade' banker Sampson Lloyd. Finally, in June 1885, with the fall of Gladstone's government, the Cabinet of Salisbury, which has been deemed a 'Fair trade' one, conceded the League's demand for a royal commission into the depression in trade and industry. With a general election in prospect, the League successfully set up its own journal *Fair Trade* in October (*The National Fair Trader* having lasted only three numbers in 1884), formed numerous local clubs, and circulated hundreds of thousands of tracts and pamphlets.

Nevertheless, this was not the seedbed for a 'fair trade nation' as was made clear by the election of 1885, when, for the only time, the NFTL did exert considerable pressure with a major publicity and membership campaign, and sufficient success in industrial towns to alarm Gladstone (Howe 1997: 131). On the other hand, the failure of the League in the countryside was palpable. For although agricultural labourers now voted for the first time, rather than providing, as some hoped, a reservoir of protectionist votes, they turned out solidly for free trade, mobilised by leaders such as Joseph Arch and the propagandist efforts of the Cobden Club. The victorious Liberal MP in Suffolk South-East R.L. Everett noted: 'The memory of the cruel misery suffered by the rural labourers during the continuance of the Corn Laws is one of the most vivid impressions existing today in the villages' (*Ipswich Journal*, 19 December 1885). Contrary to fair traders' hopes, the ramparts of the free trade nation were strengthened in 1885 in important ways, by the inclusion within it of the newly enfranchised agricultural labourers. The consumer continued to dominate, and as one MP sympathetic to fair trade had predicted 'until the majority of the consumers were ready to submit to a tax upon food, it would be useless to talk about Reciprocity or anything else' (Edward Hermon, *Hansard*, vol. 245/ 908, 22 April 1879).

Despite the defeat of the leaders of the NFTL in 1885, the disarray of the Liberals after the home rule split in 1886 and the overwhelming Unionist victory

in the next election in 1886 boosted the ‘fair trade’ cause within the Tory party, although paradoxically it was fear that a self-governing Ireland would impose tariffs that encouraged some Liberal supporters of free trade, not least Joseph Chamberlain, to move into the Unionist camp. Yet, despite strong backbench support for protectionism (with famous majorities at party conferences in 1887 and 1891), with the Tories allied to a strong Liberal Unionist party, the leadership made it clear that it had no intention of breaching the free trade regime. Lord Salisbury reiterated in the Lords ‘I utterly disbelieve that it is in your power to introduce Protection. If it were, I think it would be introducing a state of division among the classes of this country which would differ very little from civil war’ (*Hansard*, vol. 323, 817–32, quote at 831, 12 March 1888). Nor was this a course that received any sanction from expert opinion, for the Royal Commission on the Depression in Trade and Industry, rather than providing a blueprint for economic reform, had merely left the public and policy makers confused over whether there was even a depression, let alone the correct course to counter it, if it existed. The minority report provided a good summary of the fair trade case, but for the most part the Commission had simply provided a safety valve for backbench Tory discontent (Howe 1997: 197–98). More widely, no recognised economic authority had yet endorsed fair trade – rather the opposite as the majority of economists, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, emphasised the benefits of free trade and the doubtful gains from tariffs (Winch 2009: 225–26; 262–63). Nor was it entirely clear that ‘fair trade’ was the only alternative to free trade, with some dogmatic free traders ready to support countervailing duties for sugar, while rather more controversially some began to proclaim the bimetallic standard as the solution to falling prices and falling profits. In this context, the ‘fair trade’ cause was on the point of disappearance. Internally divided, officially blocked, and with no tide of public support, the League disbanded itself in 1891, with the Fair Trade Club bankrupt by 1893.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK?

In repelling the fair trade challenge, the advocates of free trade had for the most part confidently called upon statistics of rising affluence, working-class narratives of poverty under the Corn Laws, and the cry of the cheap loaf, all able to emphasise its importance for popular welfare, together with an ability to appeal to new constituencies, for example, the Women’s Co-operative Guild (Trentmann 2008: 46). Nevertheless, by the time the ‘Jubilee of Free Trade’ was commemorated in 1896, to the faithful there seemed a hollowness within, while critics from right and left lined up to celebrate the ‘death of Cobdenism’ and the ‘demise of the Manchester school’ (Howe 1997: 191–92). ‘Manchesterism’, for many synonymous with free trade, had long been under attack from Ruskinians and Arnoldians, who considered it a creed that put money and cheapness above patriotism and the ethical life. To their criticisms were now added those of the new school of progressives, Fabians and socialists keen to identify free trade with a narrow, anti-statist individualism, out of sympathy with the rising tide of collectivism. In this context, there emerged a sustained attack on what was widely termed the ‘free

trade fetish', 'free trade idolatry' or worship of free trade 'shibboleths', equating free trade in the newly fashionable post-Darwinian anthropological jargon with primitive belief systems, from which the nation would be converted by a new enlightened generation of imperial or socialist missionary. Free trade was also susceptible to more pragmatic challenges, with the continuing debate as to whether to restrict the entry into Britain of bounty-fed sugar. The 1890s also saw new worries over import penetration, with E. E. Williams sounding the populist alarm over goods 'Made in Germany' (although sold as British), while the steep rise in American tariffs, especially under the McKinley tariff of 1890, convinced increasing numbers that there remained a need to promote 'fair trade and Greater Britain' in opposition to 'free trade and Little England' (Hoffman 1933; Palen 2010; Rogers 2007). It was ultimately this call to reshape the empire that produced the Edwardian challenge to free trade, but its roots lay deep in the Victorian 'British world'.

For, however dominant the ideology of free trade proved at home after 1846, this ascendancy had not been replicated within the British colonial world. Rather tariff autonomy in the empire had provided the opportunity for national diversity, whose reality was only slowly brought home to the metropolitan public. By 1860 Melbourne had seen the first popular exposition of List's protectionist ideas, the bellwether for a lively proletarian protectionist movement in Victoria (Bannerman and Howe 2008: 327; Patterson 1968). This led to the re-imposition of tariffs in 1866, and to the full-blown protectionist creed in the shape of David Syme's journalism and writings. In a way impossible in Britain, liberalism in Victoria became protectionist (Macintyre 1991: 102–7). The Australian Customs Duty Act of 1873 reversed British 'free trade' policy since 1846 by permitting the imposition of differential duties. In Canada, the 'incidental protection' of the Galt Tariff (1859) had been turned into a fully fledged 'National policy', with tariffs designed to stimulate industrial growth. In the antipodes, meanwhile, the continuing turf war between 'free trade' New South Wales and 'protectionist' Victoria was eventually tipped towards the latter, with the creation of the Australian federation on a tariff basis in 1901 (Goodwin 1966: 40–59; Rogers 2009). New Zealand stayed out of the federation, but had already joined the tariff club with protection for infant industries in 1895. In South Africa, Hofmeyer and Rhodes were early proponents of imperial preference (Zebel 1967). In India the government had periodically resorted to tariffs, supposedly to raise revenue, although to a suspicious Lancashire cotton lobby, revenue and protection were two sides of the same coin (Harnetty 1962). Nor were the West Indies without advocates ready to proclaim that its welfare had been sacrificed to free trade and cheap sugar, as 'cosmopolitan capitalists' imported cheap continental sugar and devalued the imperial tie, even if Kew Gardens helped promote economic botany within the free trade empire.

By 1900 therefore the Victorian 'British' world was fundamentally divided rather than united by free trade. In this context, while some crusaded to convince the colonies of the benefits of free trade for young countries, a greater part of colonial opinion was won over to the idea that any reintegration of the empire would be through some form of fiscal union or imperial *zollverein* (Howe 1997: 213–22; Rubinstein 2004). The initial 'fair trade' idea of a *zollverein*, free trade within the empire, a protective tariff outside it, soon fell apart on the rock of colonial

protectionism. Even so, the colonial conferences set up first in 1887 began to voice the demand for fiscal federation and empire-wide tariffs, with growing support for preferential tariffs, especially at Ottawa in 1894. Following the conference of 1897, although not prepared to launch a tariff war, Salisbury, in deference to colonial opinion, was ready to rescind the Anglo-German and Anglo-Belgian commercial treaties that had prohibited differential treatment of the mother country and its colonies. This also prepared the ground for the Canadian grant of imperial preference in 1897, for rather than a free trade empire, the best the mother country could hope for was moderate protection in her favour, the nostrum of imperial preference, jettisoned in the 1840s but now in a suitably modernised form about to be reintroduced into the heart of the empire by Chamberlain's tariff reform crusade (Zebel 1940; Howe and Duckenfield 2008: 51–75).

What signs, however, were there that imperial preference might succeed where fair trade had failed? First, as an imperial prescription, it had growing credibility; the NFTL had been succeeded by various bodies that had prioritised empire such as the United Empire Trade League (from 1891) and in succession to the Imperial Federation League, the British Empire League had mobilised the City of London behind the imperial but not the fair trade cause (Howe 1997: 219). More widely, the idea of Greater Britain to which tariffs might contribute had galvanised a generation of intellectuals and publicists. Imperial preference would become the lynchpin of a powerful body of imperial crusaders or 'constructive imperialists' (Bell 2007). Second, the idea of tariff retaliation, whether or not combined with preference, was backed by a growing body of support, especially in the chambers of commerce, and by the turn of the century, a considerable body of business opinion favoured modifying Britain's free trade regime, with some form of retaliation, not protection, as the favoured remedy (Trentmann 1996). Third, in the countryside, among the serried ranks of farmers, land agents, and landlords who gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression in the 1890s, the majority favoured a return to protection (Green 1995: 207–22). Fourth, and perhaps above all, the case against free trade had acquired some intellectual credentials. In particular, a generation of historical economists was ready to challenge the narrative and genealogy of free trade, whilst linking protection with national regeneration and social reform (Koot 1987: 175–76).

Finally, the impact of the Boer War (1899–1902) threatened to undermine the foundations of Britain's free trade regime, as the extraordinary need for revenue to pay for the war threatened to outrun the capacity of the Victorian fiscal state. This had led to the reintroduction of expedients long considered anathema to the economically orthodox – sugar duties, a coal export tax, and, eventually, a corn duty in 1902, expedients which some feared might provide just the opening that the enemies of free trade had sought in vain since 1846. In this way, although by 1901 there were few signs either of a coherent synthesis binding together the enemies of free trade or of any sizeable popular alienation from the doctrine that had brought cheap food to the working classes, numerous pressures threatened to divide the 'free trade nation' at home as they had already done in the wider British world. To some 'Free Trade's days looked numbered' (Trentmann 2008: 185); in fact the 'Free Trade Nation' was about to be reborn.

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CHAPTER SIX

IMPERIALISM AT HOME



Patrick Brantlinger

Nothing is more peculiar than the way . . . ‘home’ is used in Jamaica. . . . With the white people, it always signifies England, even though the person using the word has never been there.

Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies* (1859)

To colonists in the far reaches of the British Empire, ‘home’ typically meant a birthplace in England, Wales, Scotland, or Ireland. According to Katie Trumpener, writing home often expressed ‘emigrant homesickness . . . as maternal desertion’ – that is, desertion by ‘the mother country’ (Trumpener 1997: 235). But home could also be anywhere in the empire or even beyond its globe-spanning frontiers. In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary Marangoly George writes that often ‘colonial discourse, especially the texts written by women, represent the management of empire as essentially “home management” on a larger scale’ (George 1996: 51). George has in mind, for example, guides to managing British households in India like Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner’s *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1890), which states: ‘We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness, but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire’ (quoted in George 1996: 51).

Despite nostalgia for the homes they had left behind, colonists everywhere established new homes. But how much were Victorians who never left their British homes aware of the colonies and the empire? ‘We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind’ (Seeley 1883: 12). J. R. Seeley’s famous remark in *The Expansion of England* (1883) conveys several ideas. Some historians infer from it that before the 1880s and the era of ‘the new imperialism’, the Victorians knew and cared little about the empire (e.g., see Porter 2001). Seeley obviously thought that his students were unfamiliar with the imperial significance and direction of ‘English’ history. That was mainly because ‘our popular historians’ (8) overlooked the true ‘progress of the English State’, leading through colonization to ‘the foundation of Greater Britain’ (12), by which he meant Britain, its colonies of white settlement, and the United States, all bound

together by racial, cultural, and linguistic ties – potentially the future home for many more Britons.

Seeley also meant that the empire had been created haphazardly, without plan or foresight: ‘Nothing great that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally, as the conquest of India’ (143). This apparent criticism implies, however, that members of the English ‘race’ were natural-born colonizers: the English sallied forth from their small island and conquered much of the world without being self-conscious about it; they simply acted heroically, thus forging the empire. ‘England’ was home to a heroic ‘imperial race’, which proved its superiority to all other races everywhere it ventured abroad. So in regard to England’s empire builders, Seeley’s ‘absence of mind’ is actually laudatory.

The Expansion of England promoted the imperial selfconsciousness that characterized late-Victorian culture. But before the 1880s, just how absent-minded about the colonies and the empire were the Victorians? Probably most knew little about the details of Britain’s conquest of India or of its colonization of North America, Australia, New Zealand, and southern Africa. Yet throughout the nineteenth century, English (or British) patriotism was inseparable from awareness of the colonies and the empire. ‘Empire was omnipresent in the everyday lives of “ordinary people” – it was there as part of the mundane’ (Hall and Rose 2006: 22), taken for granted except in crises such as the Indian ‘Mutiny’ or Rebellion of 1857–58, during which much of the British public waxed jingoistic.

At the same time, many sources of information and entertainment kept the public aware of British overseas activities. From 1837 through the 1870s, Victorian newspapers reported on the expansion of British India with the acquisitions of Sind (1838), the Punjab (1839), and Oudh (1856). The Indian Rebellion made headlines in every British journal. It aroused patriotism, of course, but also questions about the actions and role of the East India Company. Newspapers also covered the acquisitions of New Zealand (1840), Hong Kong (1842), Natal (1843), the Orange Free State (1848), Vancouver Island (1849), Burma (1852), Lagos (1861), Fiji (1874), and the Transvaal (1877). Meanwhile the Canadian and Australian colonies were ‘maturing’ and achieving sizable measures of self-government, with the expectation that, as territories of ‘white settlement’, the bonds of race, language, and religion would keep them loyal to Britain. India may have been of ‘alien race and religion’, Seeley declared, but ‘those ten millions of Englishmen who live outside the British Islands . . . are of our own blood, and are therefore united with us by the strongest tie’ (14).

Technological progress increased the speed and variety of activities not only between the metropole and the colonies, but among the colonies themselves (see Huggill in this volume). Seeley declared that it was becoming possible ‘to realise the old utopia of a Greater Britain’, because ‘Science has given to the political organism a new circulation, which is steam, and a new nervous system, which is electricity’ (61). By the end of the century, the Empire was woven into a global web of nearly instantaneous communications. In these changing circumstances, home could be several places at once. ‘The Australian colonies’ active lifelines were *inter-colonial*’, writes Stephen Muecke (2007: 50). From its earliest days of European settlement in the 1830s, New Zealand depended on New South Wales as much as on Britain for supplies, defence, and settlers. Both white New Zealanders and Maoris carried

on trade and many other interchanges with Australia (Smith 2005: 29–39). ‘During [the] first thirty years of its existence’, Muecke continues, ‘New South Wales was visited by more than a hundred ships from India. . . . Later the East India Company was permitted to ship convicts from Britain to Australia so long as [the ships] returned via India to load cotton’ (50). Before 1857, the army of the East India Company, made up largely of Indian ‘sepoys’, fought many of the battles waged in Asia on behalf of the British Empire. Indian, Chinese, and Polynesian laborers were imported into many parts of the Empire including Australia, southern Africa, Trinidad, and Fiji.

Throughout the nineteenth century, many officials served in more than one colony, forging ‘imperial careers’ in the process (Lambert and Lester 2006; see also Kennedy in this volume). A notorious example is Edward Eyre, governor of Jamaica and harsh suppressor of the 1865 riots there. Born in England, Eyre first came to the attention of the Colonial Office as an explorer in Australia in the 1840s. He is known today partly for his sympathy with Aboriginal peoples. In 1846, he assumed the lieutenant-governorship of New Zealand under governor George Grey, another much-traveled colonial official. After New Zealand, Eyre was posted to the West Indies where he eventually became governor of Jamaica (Hall 2002: 33–50). Unfortunately, Eyre’s sympathy for the indigenous peoples of Australia and New Zealand did not translate to the former slaves of the West Indies, and the violence he used to quell the Jamaican uprising embroiled him in controversy in Britain, with one side, led by Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, treating him as a hero, and the other side, led by John Stuart Mill, seeking to try him for murder (Semmel 1965).

Many colonists shared their experiences with stay-at-home Victorians through letters, travelogues, and memoirs. Almost everyone had relatives in farflung places: Charles Dickens’s and Anthony Trollope’s sons emigrated to India and Australia, and so did Matthew Arnold’s brothers. Recent historians have emphasized ‘networks connecting metropolis to colony’ as ‘the mainstay of day-to-day colonial governance’ (Laidlaw 2005: 14). There were also networks of trade and other economic activities. Many well-to-do Victorians, including George Eliot, invested in colonial enterprises (Henry 2002). Among financial flows were remittances sent by colonists back home to families and friends in Britain (Thompson 2005: 59–60, 158–62). Colonial banks, moreover, were typically underwritten by banks in London.

Throughout the Victorian period, the empire’s business was everybody’s business, even if that business was taken for granted. Routine domestic activities such as eating and dressing came to have powerful ‘associations with patriotism (the use of “empire” goods) and exotic pleasures (the glamour of familiar tropical or oriental products)’ (De Groot 2006: 170). Hundreds of commodities from abroad – tea, sugar, silk, wool, rubber, chocolate, beef, tobacco – arrived every day in British ports. The English language became peppered with Indian terms, such as curry, nabob, verandah, pundit, mango, pajamas, moghul, cheroot, thug, and bungalow. Even Australian Aboriginal terms – kangaroo, boomerang, dingo, billabong – came into use in English in the Australian colonies and occasionally in the metropole.

From the Great Exhibition of 1851 forward, imperial imagery provided the leitmotif for modern advertising in both Britain and the colonies (Richards 1990).

Advertising agencies and campaigns frequently claimed that their products were used by – and thus supposedly endorsed by – military and imperial figures, including Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. The homely act of washing one's hands took on imperial significance; Pear's Soap ads identified cleanliness with British civilization. 'Lipton's emphasised their vertical control of the tea industry, "from the tea gardens to the tea pot", and illustrated their advertisements with elephants bearing tea chests from Ceylon to the home retailer' (MacKenzie 1984: 26). J. M. MacKenzie adds that '[t]he popular art on imperial, royal, and military subjects by artists like Lady Butler . . . appeared on postcards, in advertisements, and as marketing attractions' (ibid.); the 'home country' was saturated with signs of its global reach.

Besides newspapers and advertising, there were many other sources of information about the colonies and India. John Betts's 1850 board game, *Tour of the British Colonies and Foreign Possessions*, was one of numerous popular entertainments that brought the empire into middle-class parlors. In 1851, the Great Exhibition featured the 'arts and industry' of many countries, but it placed the British 'imperial displays . . . at the very center of the Crystal Palace' (Auerbach 1999: 100). The governor of the Cape Colony declared that the Exhibition could teach prospective settlers what to expect in southern Africa (ibid.: 101–2). By the 1880s, exhibitions held in London and other major cities were often explicitly 'colonial and Indian', and there were similar exhibitions in colonial capitals. Even before 1851, there were numerous public displays and spectacles including history paintings and panoramas that recreated famous battles, expeditions, and scenes from the empire and its frontiers (Altick 1978: 176–83; see also Melman in this volume). 'Displayed everywhere in dedicated buildings', writes MacKenzie, panoramas 'were a significant means whereby an Imperial people could visualize and encompass within their own imaginations the scale of conquest and command of the outer world' (2001: 280).

In the early nineteenth century, William Bullock's much-visited London Museum or 'Egyptian Hall' – so named because of the Egyptian motifs in its facade – exhibited curiosities from Cook's voyages and even specimens of exotic peoples (Laplanders, for instance), though with no particular imperial intent (Altick 1978: 235–44). But the 'Bushmen' exhibited in 1847 and the 'Kaffirs' shown in the Cosmorama Rooms in 1850 evoked British colonial expansion in Africa. The East India Company and the London Missionary Society also established museums. Starting in 1826, the LMS Museum displayed 'numerous, and (in some instances) *horrible*, IDOLS . . . from the South Sea Islands, from India, China, and Africa . . .' (quoted in Altick 1978: 298). Probably the most famous item in the 'Oriental Repository' of the East India Company was Tipoo Sahib's 'mechanical man-eating tiger', a trophy from the Battle of Seringapatam in 1799. By 1850, the repository was receiving more than 40,000 visits a year. Starting in 1830, the Royal United Service Institution also featured imperial displays (Altick 1978: 299–300).

From about 1840 through the 1860s, attitudes toward imperial expansion were tempered by several factors. Belief in free trade was often coupled with the view that the creation of new colonies was expensive and unwise. In 1852 Benjamin Disraeli called colonies 'millstones around our necks'. The West Indian colonies had been based on slave labor, hardly a cause for patriotism. Irish unrest and the



Figure 6.1 1890s UK Lipton's magazine advert.
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives

Great Famine of 1845–50 did not inspire pride in the empire. The Australian colonies began as penal settlements, also no cause for celebration. There and in North America, Africa, and New Zealand, colonization involved warfare and violence against indigenous peoples, a source of ongoing controversy throughout the nineteenth century. Yet the colonies benefited both the colonizers and the British at home in many often imperceptible ways, including providing inspiration for patriotism and English – or Anglo-Saxon – racial pride. Probably most Victorians, while opposed to slavery and disturbed by reports of slaughter on imperial frontiers, were proud to belong to ‘the conquering race’.

The evangelical revival starting in the 1700s gave rise to the modern missionary movement with its global ambitions. Abolitionism was the first worldwide humanitarian crusade, and from it in 1837 emerged the Aborigines Protection Society and a critical discourse about the treatment of indigenous peoples in the colonies. Yet religion often served to justify war and imperialist expansion (see Lester in this volume). Writing about ‘khaki Christianity’ and ‘the psychology of jingoism’ at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, J. A. Hobson declared:

Religion has been almost universally utilized by governing individuals or classes to furnish a stimulus of fanaticism in war, by representing it as a sacred duty . . . to punish other peoples who are either heathen or wicked . . . and whose land and other property by right belong to us.

(Hobson 1901: 47)

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the missionary movement ‘gave shape to middle-class identity and culture, enabling the emergence of a “social” sphere of cultural intervention’ (Twells 2009: 5). By “social” sphere’, Alison Twells means something different from the supposedly separate, gendered private and public spheres: the social sphere was one in which British women were involved in many ways beyond their homes. ‘Early-nineteenth-century domesticity was not for many girls and women a dull and confining world, from which they were keen to escape into the relative freedom of a separate sphere; rather, it was shot through with social and global concerns’ (ibid.: 8). In missionary discourse, the English, Scottish, and Irish poor at home were commonly likened to heathens and savages abroad. Both women and men who engaged in missionary activities helped to create ‘a popular imperial culture at home’, supported by the burgeoning and highly influential missionary publishing industry (Twells 2009: 10; see also Etherington 2005; Johnston 2003; Thorne 1999).

Andrew Thompson notes that, in the 1840s and 1850s, ‘the most common empire-related subject’ for songs and ballads was emigration (Thompson 2005: 51), and this was true also of early Victorian novels, poetry, and plays. While the topic of emigration reinforced awareness of the colonies, it did not necessarily inspire patriotism, let alone jingoism. Thompson writes: ‘There were ballads on the horrors of transportation; on shipwrecks and massacres on arrival; on emigrants’ longing for England and the pain of separation from family and friends; and on the opportunity to make one’s fortune (Australian gold digging was a common subject in the mid-century), or at least to gain regular work and enjoy a better diet and climate’ (ibid.: 51). Leaving home – that is, Britain – could be

painful, in part because it entailed recognition that home was a less than perfect place. Related to the topics of emigration and the colonies was the discourse of slums and suburbanization. From mid-century on, this urban discourse stoked fears of racial degeneration and the decline of the empire. As Todd Kuchta demonstrates in *Semi-Detached Empire*, the ugliness and mediocrity of suburban architecture and culture was frequently employed as an analogy for the colonies, and vice-versa.

In the 1830s, when southern Africa, South Australia, and New Zealand first began to attract settlers, emigration agencies sprang up. 'A flood of promotional literature poured forth' advocating emigration (Thompson 2005: 58). Missionary societies and organizations dedicated to emigration circulated works such as Samuel Sidney's 1848 *Australian Hand-Book*. The National Colonization Society was established in 1830 to promote Edward Gibbon Wakefield's ideas about 'systematic colonization' (Harper 2001: 76), while the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was established in 1840. From its founding to 1870, the Commission assisted more than 340,000 emigrants, most of them bound for Australia and New Zealand, funded largely through land sales in the colonies (Richards 2004: 138). Eric Richards calls the commission 'one of the most important agencies of government planning in the Victorian age' (ibid.: 137). Among the promoters of emigration were sometimes landlords, especially in Ireland and Scotland, hoping to modernize their farms by shipping impoverished peasants abroad. Starting in the 1840s, trade unions sometimes also set up emigration funds as 'a safety-valve for surplus labour' (Thompson 2005: 69).

Although there were many expressions of the power and glory of the British Empire throughout the Victorian era, from the 1830s to the 1850s the discourse on emigration stressed overpopulation, unemployment, pauperism, and famine at home – hardly reasons for celebrating imperial greatness. An 1850 *Edinburgh Review* article on colonization referenced pauperism as a reason for 'the decay of Patriotism' (De Vere 1850: 6). The author, Aubrey de Vere, emphasizes that 'Colonization has been the subject of numberless books and pamphlets, and has afforded a frequent topic to the periodical press. Public meetings have been held in many parts of England; tracts have been circulated; the attention of Parliament has been again and again directed to it' (ibid.: 1). De Vere does not have to espouse colonial expansion, let alone militarism or jingoism, because 'without founding new colonies we have ample means' for alleviating poverty and overpopulation in already existing colonies (ibid.: 15). Emigration to the colonies is an urgent matter, however, because 'When every country in the old world is full, the alternative will be, colonization or convulsion' (ibid.: 14).

Many of the early novels written in the colonies depict emigrating and settling in new homes. Charles Rowcroft's *Tales of the Colonies; or, the Adventures of an Emigrant* (1843), dealing with conditions in early Tasmania, is an example, and so is Catharine Parr Traill's *Backwoods of Canada* (1836). Traill writes that she 'has endeavoured to afford every possible information to the wives and daughters of emigrants of the higher class who contemplate seeking a home amid our Canadian wilds' (Traill 1836: 1). Despite Traill's reference to social class, in the colonies or the US, everyone from transported convicts to bankrupt aristocrats had a chance to start over again and to prosper. Mr Micawber in Dickens's *David Copperfield*, feckless at home, becomes a magistrate in Australia. In *The Caxtons*

(1850), Edward Bulwer Lytton portrays several ne'er-do-wells emigrating to Australia and prospering in 'Bushland'. The protagonist returns home – that is, to England – morally and financially redeemed. The empire 'reinvented class differences in exotic locations', writes Eric Richards, but those returning from the colonies and India affected social structures and institutions in Britain. Richards mentions the Anglo-Indian 'nabob phenomenon' as an example: 'The influence of the returned emigrant from India [in the nineteenth century] was palpable in many aspects of British home life, from eating habits to architecture, from language to racism' (Richards 2004: 107).

Some may have returned to Britain with fortunes, but others returned because they had failed to prosper – the fate, for example, of H. Rider Haggard in southern Africa. (But Haggard proceeded to make a fortune, starting in the 1880s, by writing his popular romances about Africa.) In 1851, there were over 33,000 persons born in the colonies residing in England and Wales; by 1901, that number had grown to more than 136,000 (Tabili 2006: 58; see also Thompson 2005: 61). Small numbers of Indians and Africans also resided in Britain, some of them as permanent residents. London's East End saw the growth of an Oriental quarter, composed largely of 'lascar' seamen. There were also Indian street musicians, sellers of matches or trinkets, and purveyors of Christian tracts (Fisher 2004: 383–87). And London 'became a resort for growing numbers of Indian royalty' (ibid.: 406). From the days of slavery on, a small number of Africans and African Americans also resided in Britain. A few, such as Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince, published their stories. Ironically some of the best information about people of African descent living in Britain comes from the records of convicts transported to Australia (Duffield 1994: 52–58; Pybus 2006).

Perhaps Charles Dickens's *Household Words* is as good a gauge as any of the significance of the colonies and the empire for the Victorians at mid-century. Dickens established the journal in 1850 with the intention of bringing wholesome, informative reading into ordinary English homes. However homey it aspired to be, prominent among its diverse topics were India and the colonies. The first issue contained 'A Bundle of Emigrants' Letters', penned by Dickens and emigration advocate Caroline Chisholm, and also 'Milking in Australia'. Australia is mentioned in 195 *Household Words* articles between 1850 and 1859, and the East India Company 128 times. The journal frequently touted emigration as a way to remove Britons 'from the poor-house, the jail, and the asylum, to the green hills, and fertile fields of a new land' (Capper and Wills 1853: 43). Starting in 1846, Dickens worked with Angela Burdett Coutts and Urania Cottage, which took in 'fallen women' and prepared them for emigration to the colonies. An April 1853 essay in *Household Words*, 'Home for Homeless Women', promoted this philanthropic endeavor.

All readers of Dickens's novels (and his readers were legion) learned from them something about the colonies as destinations, sources of exile, work, and potential wealth. The stories of the Artful Dodger, the Micawbers, the Peggotys, Little Emily, Mr Mell, Martha Endell, Magwitch and Pip lead to the colonies (or, in Pip's case, to Egypt). But many of Dickens's characters, like Magwitch, return from the colonies or the United States. Martin Chuzzlewit returns to England after being swindled in the US. Helen and Neville Landless in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

have come to England from Ceylon. John Rokesmith in *Our Mutual Friend* has been in the West Indies. Major Bagstock in *Dombey and Son* (1848) has come home from India with an Oriental servant, 'the Native', whom the Major berates and abuses. And Dombey's headquarters are near the 'rich' East India House in London, 'teeming with . . . precious stuffs and stones, tigers, elephants, howdahs, hookahs, umbrellas, palm trees, panacquins, and gorgeous princes of a brown complexion sitting on carpets, with their slippers very much turned up at the toes' (Dickens 1848: 32). Moreover, William Makepeace Thackeray, who was born in India, illuminated if only glancingly that portion of the empire in his novels. In *Vanity Fair* (1848), Jos Sedley serves as a tax collector in the Indian backwater of Boggley Wollah, while Major Dobbin and his regiment, after Waterloo, are shipped away 'ten thousand miles to the military station of Bundelgunge, in the Madras division of our Indian empire' (Thackeray 1848: 418). When Dobbin comes home on leave, his regiment takes part in the 1824–26 Burmese campaign. Even a quiet, domestic tale about elderly spinsters, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), puts a spotlight on India when Miss Matty's long-lost brother returns home from there. And the diamond from which Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) takes its title was stolen by an English soldier during the battle of Seringapatam, causing disruption in the Verinder household in England over 40 years later.

Before the Indian Rebellion of 1857–58, over 40 novels were published in Britain and India with Indian settings. From the Rebellion forward, dozens of 'Mutiny novels' appeared (Chakravarty 2005). Many poets also wrote about India and the colonies, sometimes in epics that celebrated imperial expansion (Tucker 2008: 310). Alfred Tennyson's bestselling *Idylls of the King*, though mourning the fall of Arthur's Camelot, celebrates the greatness of the modern British Empire. In his 1873 dedication to Queen Victoria, Tennyson writes:

The loyal to their crown
Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
Our ocean-empire with her boundless homes
For ever-broadening England, and her throne
In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
That knows not her own greatness.

(Tennyson 1969: 115)

This is not to say that the readers of Dickens, Thackeray, and Tennyson were imperialists in the sense of favoring further expansions of the empire, though Tennyson's 'ever-broadening England' with its 'boundless homes' suggests a natural and unceasing process of colonization.

Among major Victorian novelists, none had more familiarity with the colonies (although not with India) than Anthony Trollope. After working for the post office in Ireland, Trollope was sent to Egypt, Scotland, and in 1858 to the West Indies to improve postal services in those locations. The last trip resulted in *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (1859), which Trollope called 'the best book that has come from my pen' (1968: 111). He wrote about his later travels in *North America* (1862), *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), and *South Africa* (1878). In his travelogues, Trollope comes across as a common-sensical reporter whose views,

though sometimes superficial, are rarely extreme. ‘Trollope’s amiable Englishness was embedded in an imagined map of empire’, writes Catherine Hall, ‘which surfaces periodically’ in his novels. ‘His mapping of places and peoples, utilizing familiar language and images, brought Maori “cannibals”, Jamaican “Quashees” and energetic white Australian settlers right into the parlour’ (Hall 2002: 211). Though no writer can be identified as a perfect expression of Victorian public opinion about the colonies, Trollope probably comes as close as any.

Throughout the nineteenth century, melodramas galore, attracting working as well as middle-class audiences, celebrated the virtues of British soldiers and sailors. ‘As long as Britons were involved in fighting somewhere’, writes Michael Booth, ‘the flow of military melodramas continued unchecked’ (1965: 96). First performed in 1836, Andrew Campbell’s *Rule Britannia* ends when ‘British sailors bearing a flag inscribed RULE BRITANNIA overpower the villain and his smuggler gang. A sailor points out . . . that “we’ve taught our enemies never to be sure of victory when they have to deal with Jack Tars whose song is ‘Rule Britannia’ and whose watch-word is Nelson”’ (quoted in Booth 1965: 106). Emigration was a familiar topic for plays, and so were the lives of ‘Englishmen in India’, as the title of an 1839 melodrama by William Dimond has it. Even the first Opium War, often viewed critically in the press, drew a patriotic response on the London stage in J. P. Taylor’s *The War with China; or, Britons Rule the Waves* (1842). The Indian Rebellion of 1857–58 was a favourite subject for playwrights including Dion Boucicault, whose *Jessie Brown; or, the Relief of Lucknow* first appeared in New York City in 1858. During the early nineteenth century, melodramas often expressed versions of class conflict at home, but this emphasis gradually gave way to themes of imperial solidarity. ‘Imperial subjects offered a perfect opportunity to externalise the villain, who increasingly became the corrupt rajah, the lascivious Chinese or Japanese nobleman, the barbarous “fuzzy-wuzzy” or black, facing a cross-class brotherhood of heroism, British officer and ranker together’ (MacKenzie 1984: 45; see also Newey in this volume).

Much of the music popular in both the metropole and the colonies also featured military and imperial themes. ‘The empire’s “small” wars gave rise to a string of ballads that were very much alike in their emphasis on the savagery, brutality and treachery of non-European peoples, and the courage and bravery of those sent to fight in far-away locations’ (Thompson 2005: 51). In his study of imperialism and music, Jeffrey Richards demonstrates that imperial themes pervaded Victorian culture in many genres, everything from music hall tunes such as the 1878 song ‘We don’t want to fight but by Jingo if we do’ to hymns like ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, composed by Arthur Sullivan in 1871. Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas often mock imperial pomp and circumstance, but they do so lovingly.

In the 1840s and 1850s, ‘race’ was rapidly becoming the central factor in explaining all of history, including the history of the British Empire. Prior to the Education Act of 1870, the schools and universities did little teaching of history and geography, unless it was the history of Greece and Rome. But a few textbooks such as William Collier’s *History of the British Empire* and James Hewitt’s *Geography of the British Colonies*, both dating from 1869, ‘allowed imperial events to predominate’. They did not offer, however, ‘a concept of empire

as the consummation of the British state', as Seeley thought textbooks should do (MacKenzie 1984: 176–77). Nevertheless, an imperial historiography grounded in theories of race can be traced back to Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799–1805). In *The Saxons in England* (1848), John Kemble celebrates 'the great epos of the Germanic and Scandinavian races', forebears of modern England and the British Empire, while John MacGregor's *History of the British Empire* (1852) extols the 'progress of the Anglo-Saxon race' around the world (Brantlinger 2009: 42–43). Thomas Carlyle, too, in *Past and Present* (1843) and other works stressed the spread of 'Saxondom' around the world, foreshadowing later surveys of the empire that espoused Anglo-Saxon racial solidarity, including Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* (1868) and James Anthony Froude's *Oceana; or England and Her Colonies* (1886).

Throughout the Victorian period, excitement over geographical exploration and the prospects of imperial expansion went hand in hand. Robert Stafford notes that '[t]he promotion and popularity of exploration [was] a powerful indicator of the strength of Britain's expansionist drive from the 1790s to the First World War' (2001: 294; see also Driver 2001). Founded in 1830, the Royal Geographical Society aimed to advance the knowledge, expansion, and governance of the empire. Ever since Cook's voyages, which opened the way for colonization in Australia, New Zealand, and western Canada, geography had been the 'imperial science' par excellence (Bell *et al.* 1995). The teaching of geography, like that of history, may have languished in the schools, but the Victorian reading public turned many exploration journals into bestsellers.

Like war, exploration had its heroes, widely celebrated both at home and in the colonies. After David Livingstone published *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, members of every social class flocked to see and listen to him (Magubane 2004: 44). Following Livingstone, missionaries to Africa emulated his example, striving to spread the gospel throughout 'the Dark Continent'. Admiral Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Henry Havelock, General 'Chinese' Gordon, and many other naval and military figures were also widely hero-worshipped as defenders of the empire and conveyors of civilization to a benighted world, a category that included everyone from African and Polynesian 'heathens' and 'cannibals' to the Spanish and Portuguese.

Naval, military, exploration, and missionary heroics inspired a burgeoning industry of adventure fiction, directed mainly at young, male readers (Bristow 1991; Richards 1989). Such fiction is commonly viewed as a late-Victorian phenomenon, but it originated in the 1830s with Captain Frederick Marryat's midshipmen novels. Marryat's adolescent sailors were matched by stage versions of 'Jack Tar', whom J. S. Bratton calls 'the innocent ruler of the world', as in T. P. Cooke and Douglas Jerrold's highly popular 1829 melodrama *Black-Ey'd Susan* (Bratton 1991: 58). Both Robert Ballantyne and W. G. H. Kingston began producing adventure fiction for young readers in the 1840s. From S. O. Beeton's *Boy's Own Magazine* (1855) forward, journals for young readers portrayed boy heroes such as Jack Harkaway emulating explorers, sailors, and soldiers on imperial frontiers.

Kingston edited *The Colonist*, *The Colonial Magazine*, and the *East Indian Review* in the 1840s. He founded *Kingston's Magazine* to promote the empire.

He served as an officer of a colonization society, while writing such works as *How to Emigrate; or, The British Colonists* (1850). In Kingston's adventure tale *Peter the Whaler* (1851), the adolescent hero, banished from home for poaching, first sails on an emigrant ship bound for Quebec. The captain and crew treat the mostly Irish emigrants like slaves on a slave ship. Because of this abuse, 'instead of friends and supporters, [the emigrants] were to be foes to England and the English – aliens of the country which should have cherished and protected them, but did not' (Kingston 1851: 37). The shipboard abuse exemplifies the deplorable conditions that forced people to abandon their British homes in the first place: 'When so many of our poor countrymen are leaving our shores annually to lands where they can procure work and food, we should have a far better supervision and a more organised system of emigration than now exists' (Kingston 1851: 33–34). Kingston urges his readers to help establish such a system. Despite such criticism, *Peter the Whaler* is highly chauvinistic. Before Peter sails, his clergyman father tells him, 'Wherever you wander, my son, remember you are a Briton, and cease not to love your native land' (Kingston 1851: 21). That was a main theme in everything that Kingston wrote. In Quebec, Peter scales 'the summit of the Citadel on Cape Diamond, whence one may look over the celebrated Plains of Abraham', where 'the gallant Wolf gained the victory which gave Canada to England, and where, fighting nobly, he fell in the hour of triumph' (Kingston 1851: 76). *Peter the Whaler* may be critical of how emigrants are treated, yet there is no greater country in the world than England.

Even in 'the Hungry Forties', many paeans to the British Empire were published. In *Masterman Ready* (1841), Marryat's version of *Robinson Crusoe* for young readers, William Seagrave learns about colonies from his father, who tells him: 'the sun is said, and very truly, never to set upon . . . English possessions; for . . . the sun shines either upon one portion or another of the globe which is a colony to our country' (Marryat 1841: 140). So, too, in his 1846 guide to the empire, Leith Ritchie cites Lord Bacon on the Spanish Empire as source of 'the sun never sets' trope, but today, he says, that accolade belongs to 'England', which is 'a giantess even among the proudest nations of the earth; and as for the extent of her territory . . . "her morning drum-beat following the sun . . . circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of its martial airs"' (Ritchie 1846: v). Ritchie aims to provide an account 'at once popular and practical' of the empire; histories and other sources are plentiful, he notes, so that he will only 'give the heads of knowledge' (Ritchie 1846: vi).

Most educated Victorians were imperialists, in the sense that they regarded the forging of the empire as a key reason for taking pride in being English – or British. Typical of Victorian attitudes is Alexander Kinglake's comment, in his popular Middle Eastern travelogue *Eothen* (1844), about 'queenly London – the centre of the greatest and strongest amongst all earthly dominions' (Kinglake 1844: 33). So, too, in another popular travelogue from the 1840s, *The Crescent and the Cross*, Eliot Warburton writes:

As England is the greatest commercial country in the world, it follows that her colonies should be the most numerous and flourishing. . . . English character,

energy, industry, and tolerance, furnish all the qualifications essential to the increase and stability of a colony. Such has been the case in North America and Australasia; at the Cape, also, and in the East and West Indies, as far as a British population has extended.

(Warburton 1845: 349)

Warburton adds: 'England, her tributaries and colonies, occupy about one-sixth of the inhabited world. Queen Victoria rules over 100,000,000 of people directly, and at least an equal number of subsidiaries' (Kinglake 1982: 349).

By the end of the nineteenth century, claims like Warburton's had developed into a surrogate religion. As rivals for empire emerged (the United States and a newly unified Germany among them) and as the drumbeats of war grew louder, anxiety about Britain's imperial future exacerbated 'the psychology of jingoism' that J. A. Hobson criticized during the Anglo-Boer War. Infused with racism and religiosity, jingoism became a pervasive ideological stew. Many late Victorians and Edwardians seem to have agreed with J. A. Cramb, who in *Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain* (1900) declared: 'empires are successive incarnations of the Divine ideas', best exemplified by the success of the British Empire in the Darwinian struggle for survival among nations and races (Cramb 1900: 230). Critics like Hobson formed a small minority, but it is nevertheless unclear how many and in what degree Britons, both at home and in the colonies, subscribed to imperialism in the pseudo-religious sense. Even when they resisted further expansions of the empire, nearly everyone acknowledged Britain's imperial greatness. If at the start of Victoria's reign pride in the empire was only fitfully expressed and often qualified by criticisms of the social conditions that spurred emigration, by 1900 for many the entire empire could be considered 'home', as Kennedy Jones of the *Daily Mail* proclaimed: 'It was the policy on which we worked for the whole of my journalistic career – One Flag, One Empire, One Home' (quoted in Thompson 2005: 41).

If imperialist ideology took on religious overtones, so did the Victorians' worship of 'home'. For his 1823 opera *Clari, the Maid of Milan*, John Howard Payne wrote 'Home, Sweet Home', and in 1827 Felicia Hemans praised

The stately Homes of England!
How beautiful they stand,
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
O'er all the pleasant land!

(Hemans 2002: 334–36)

In that ideal locale (but during the very real, 'home-destroying' Crimean War), Coventry Patmore installed the equally ideal 'Angel in the House', publishing the first portion of his poem in 1854. As numerous other writers made clear, however, home was not always an abode of peace and marital bliss. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), 'the madwoman in the attic' incinerates Thornfield Hall. The 'sensation fiction' of the 1860s foregrounded adultery, bigamy, and other crimes including murder. And traveling to a country estate to solve a mystery, Sherlock Holmes tells Dr Watson that 'deeds of hellish cruelty . . . may go on' in 'these lonely houses' without anyone ever discovering them (Doyle 1985: 270). Perhaps the Victorians fetishized 'home'

because, throughout the nineteenth century, millions were leaving their homes in Britain and migrating to the colonies or elsewhere in the world in search of new ones. Perhaps, too, Virginia Woolf had the final word about the Victorian cult of the home when she commented on ‘those comfortably padded lunatic asylums which are known, euphemistically, as the stately homes of England’ (1953: 202).

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CHAPTER SEVEN

HUMAN TRAFFIC

—♦—
Eric Richards

They have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. There has therefore been something in their removals analogous in nature to religious schism. The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture in which, so long as they remained at home, they participated. The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture . . .

Eliot 1948: 64

I

T. S. Eliot, himself an emigrant, identified the divided psyches of departing emigrants. Such a state of mind was written on the faces of the sensitive recently married couple depicted in Ford Madox Brown's picture *The Last of England*. It was the best-known image of the Victorian emigrant and captured at the moment of departure, one evidently clouded with melancholy and apprehension, a picture of exile, loss and reluctance. The bourgeois Londoners huddle against the wind and spray off the cliffs of Dover, huddled also against their callow fellow emigrants, clearly of the lower classes. Brown's couple were hardly the vibrant exultant expatriates 'erupting' and 'exploding' across the Anglo world to revolutionise three continents (Belich 2009). Just visible in the picture is a fragile infant beneath the young mother's cape – the next generation, upon whose behalf departing emigrants commonly justified their extraordinary act of emigration.

During the long voyage – about 120 days to Australia in their case – emigrants were often to be found on one or other side of a cultural divide. One group of emigrants considered themselves as guardians of moral and social conventions, upholders of standards of behaviour and decorum, ideally enhancing the tone of the floating community. Many on the other side of the divide regarded the voyage as a release from convention, a relaxation or rejection of normal constraints. James Bell, a young Presbyterian Scot from Dumfries, on a voyage from Deptford to Port Adelaide in 1838–39, was discombobulated to his core by the collapse of standards among not only the 'emigrants' but also his fellow 'passengers' on board the

Planter. There was a breakdown of expected standards: he had never seen ‘people indulge in every criminal pleasure and sinful crime so unblushingly as Passengers on board this vessel’. He saw the transit of cultural standards under the greatest threat when people migrated, and it was a frequent refrain on many such voyages in all directions: ‘They give me no good opinion of human nature’, he declared (Bell 1838–39: 16, 42). The voyage seemed to polarise and accentuate class contrasts. Arrival might extend the struggle between the transposed cultural conventions and the liberated opportunities in a new context.

Victorian emigrants from Britain and Ireland were an unwieldy body of people not only on account of their sheer numbers – perhaps ten million – but also in their extreme diversity, from paupers to aristocrats, from atheistic socialists to standard-issue bishops, from convicts to missionaries. Even such a small and distant destination as New Zealand was host to a remarkable confusion of British immigrants who defied categorisation (Phillips and Hearn 2008). Celebrating their variety is easier than characterising these teeming millions. We barely know their basic features let alone what drove their intercontinental migrations. Still less do we know their suitability, capacity and willingness to act as conduits for Victorian cultural forms. Some undoubtedly sought to recreate their homelands, the Victorian World as they perceived it, in precise detail on alien shores. Others, from all parts of the British Isles, strove to escape and reject that world, sometimes with a burning hatred of their origins. Most emigrants experienced a mixture of negative and positive emotions towards their home country.

Ford Madox Brown’s depiction of the downcast couple was prompted by the departure of his friend, the sculptor Thomas Woolner, as an emigrant to Australia in July 1852: ‘Woolner, alas! is gone to the gold diggings, hoping to amass millions to carry on his art’ (Hueffer 1896: 91). Brown himself entertained his own notion of emigrating to India – a plan which was finally given up when the sale of his picture in 1855 relieved both his finances and his depression. His own commentary on the episode caught some of the anarchic and unstructured shape of the great emigrant movements of his day. He said that he painted *The Last of England* in the open air in order to achieve the best light effects; he was especially keen to ‘bring the pathos of the subject more home to the beholder’. Brown executed the painting in Hampstead when, in his own words, he was ‘most of the time intensely miserable, very hard up & a little mad’ (Brown 1865: 124).

Brown’s image accorded closely with the statistical version of emigration: most emigrants were young and usually slightly better off and more skilled and literate than most of the home population (Richards 1999: 345–59). Moreover such people tended to emigrate close to the time of marriage. But *The Last of England* relegated the generality of British emigrants to the periphery of Brown’s narrative. He may also have misrepresented the general psychology of departure, which, by his own account, reflected his personal dejection at the time of the painting. No single picture, of course, could accommodate the great spectrum of types dotted through the history of British emigration, including those who left to retire or to escape their financial or marital problems. The scale of the British emigration encompassed a staggering array of social types. The standard model of the settler family departing in quest of an ideal farmstead in virgin territory covers only a small segment of the diaspora. Many more were labourers, skilled or not, domestic servants and artisans



Figure 7.1 *The Last of England*, 1860 (oil on canvas).
Ford Madox Brown (1821–93). Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, UK.
The Bridgeman Art Library

of all types, often urban people who emigrated to other urban places. Some of the most mobile of the overseas British were skilled operatives, miners and agriculturists and technicians. They included the most dynamic emigrants, the truly entrepreneurial capitalists who were able to generate new springs of economic advancement in the colonies and in the westward expansion of the frontier in the Americas and Australasia. The empire was also populated by British people who never expected to settle permanently – including legions of professionals, merchants, bankers, planters, missionaries, soldiers, technicians, sportsmen, teachers, clergymen, doctors, nurses, musicians – a vast *dramatis personae* (Richards 2004: 296, 363).

II

The Victorians were more mobile than any earlier generation. Internal migration had swollen and accelerated not only among the poor itinerant ‘migrating classes’ (Samuel 1973: 123), but also among the population at large. This internal circulation was so large that emigration seemed almost a minor tributary of the

mighty rivers of people moving within the British Isles. Migration within the British Isles was generally short distance and incremental, but over several generations the ultimate redistribution of population was decisive. Among the internal migrants some made longer shifts, for instance Highland Scots and Irish people moved as far as Glasgow, Dundee, Liverpool and London. They were virtually emigrants within the homeland and they developed kinship networks and quasi-political associations to succour and protect them in unfamiliar territory. Unlike the movers within, however, the emigrants sought to replant their roots in alien contexts or else invent society anew.

Class was an ineradicable trace element in all British emigration, usually expressed in the determination to replicate the class forms of home in new colonial contexts. Richard Whately, the Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, welcomed plans for new colonies for this very reason: they would

fairly represent English society, and every new-comer would have his own class to fall into; and to whatever class he belonged he would find its relations to the others, and the support derived from the others much the same as in the parent country. There would then be little more in Van Diemen's Land, or in Canada revolting to the habits and feelings of an emigrant than if he had merely shifted his residence from Sussex to Cumberland or Devonshire, – little more than a change of natural scenery.

(Whately 1832: 197–98)

This was certainly the prevailing model among many migrants; but others set their faces implacably against the transplantation of class and its connotations.

The Victorians were aware that they had contributed disproportionately to the great flows of people out of Europe, spreading their influences wherever they landed. The Victorian British distributed themselves across the globe in unprecedented numbers and exerted demographic consequences that outlasted most other residues of the Victorian age. Increasingly peripatetic themselves, the Victorians were also instrumental in other human traffic beyond the British Isles. While attempting to eradicate slavery across the world, they simultaneously channelled tens of thousands of contract labourers, mostly indentured labour from Asia, to the Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa and Australia. And they continued to transport their own convicts to Australia even as late as the 1860s, despite mounting opposition. Human trafficking was integral to the enterprise of the *Pax Britannica*, but mostly among its own volitional emigrants.

The large numbers of British people living abroad caused the census takers increasing difficulty. The census of 1861 commented on the extraordinary dispersion of the British people over the previous few decades. Conventional migration to the British colonies had certainly increased in the past four decades, but more British born were living in foreign countries – a total of 2,418,091, of whom 2,224,743 were in the United States (72 per cent of them Irish and 4.5 per cent Scots), which was easily the greatest destination of Victorian emigrants (Census of England and Wales 1861: III 4–5). By 1890 there were more than 1,500,000 British-born people living in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. But this

was less than half the number in the United States, always an awkward fact for the enthusiasts of empire and ‘the British race’ and for the definition of the Victorian world.

There was a bewildering range of destinations for the prospective Victorian emigrant. There were settlements of British sheep farmers in Uruguay, and pioneers from Britain also reached Chile and Paraguay. For instance, in 1878, there were 3,000 Scots in Buenos Aires alone, and 30,000 in Argentina at large. There were expatriate British communities in virtually every country in the world, though the main destinations for permanent settlement were in Anglophone countries. Some of these British outposts beyond the formal empire developed all the trappings of expatriate British life, whether in Lima or Moscow, Montevideo or Tangier. Recognisable British Gothic architecture was found among their churches; they manicured their cricket strips and tennis courts; and they cultivated Gilbert and Sullivan, though mainly within a mercantile ethos.

The start of the Victorian age witnessed an accelerated rate of emigration, a shifting of gear no less, despite the fact that indenturing had practically ceased by 1800 and convict emigration had almost terminated by mid century. British people no longer contracted themselves to unknown employers in remote destinations. Emigration had changed its character markedly. British emigrants were increasingly self-financing and were favoured with a widening choice of destinations in the newly expanded British empire. Most British emigrants passed through Liverpool, which was the greatest emigrant port of the nineteenth century.

In a short time a comprehensive apparatus of emigration was erected, from the hinterlands to the ports and the destinations, and subject to varying degrees of government supervision. The respectability of emigration was enhanced with the imprimatur of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners from the end of the 1830s, who orchestrated assisted emigration to the colonies for three decades, further encouraged by landlords, philanthropic bodies, the Poor Law Commissioners, and a little earlier by influential social commentators, including the equivocal Malthus. By then there had emerged all the paraphernalia of persuasion and recruitment for prospective emigrants – newspapers were full of advertisements for prospective emigrants, itinerant lecturers were employed by shipping companies and colonies to activate the labouring classes, offering cheap or assisted passages to the lowest echelons of the working population. Literacy was a distinct advantage in the negotiation of the hurdles of long-distance migration. The middling orders across the British Isles were now better informed by improved postal facilities and by the recommendations and remittances sent by family members already overseas. This multiplying intelligence reduced anxiety and the fear of alienation among intending emigrants. As the century wore on the fear of native populations, of isolation and of wild animals all receded in the minds of prospective emigrants. Confidence was reinforced by the improved technology of oceanic shipping and by the introduction of minimal governmental regulation of shipping standards by mid century. Emigrant journeying and acclimatisation on arrival became commonplace, even domesticated in the Victorian era.

Madox Brown had been aware that the year of *The Last of England*, 1852, was a peak of emigration. Yet emigrant numbers grew further in later decades, always

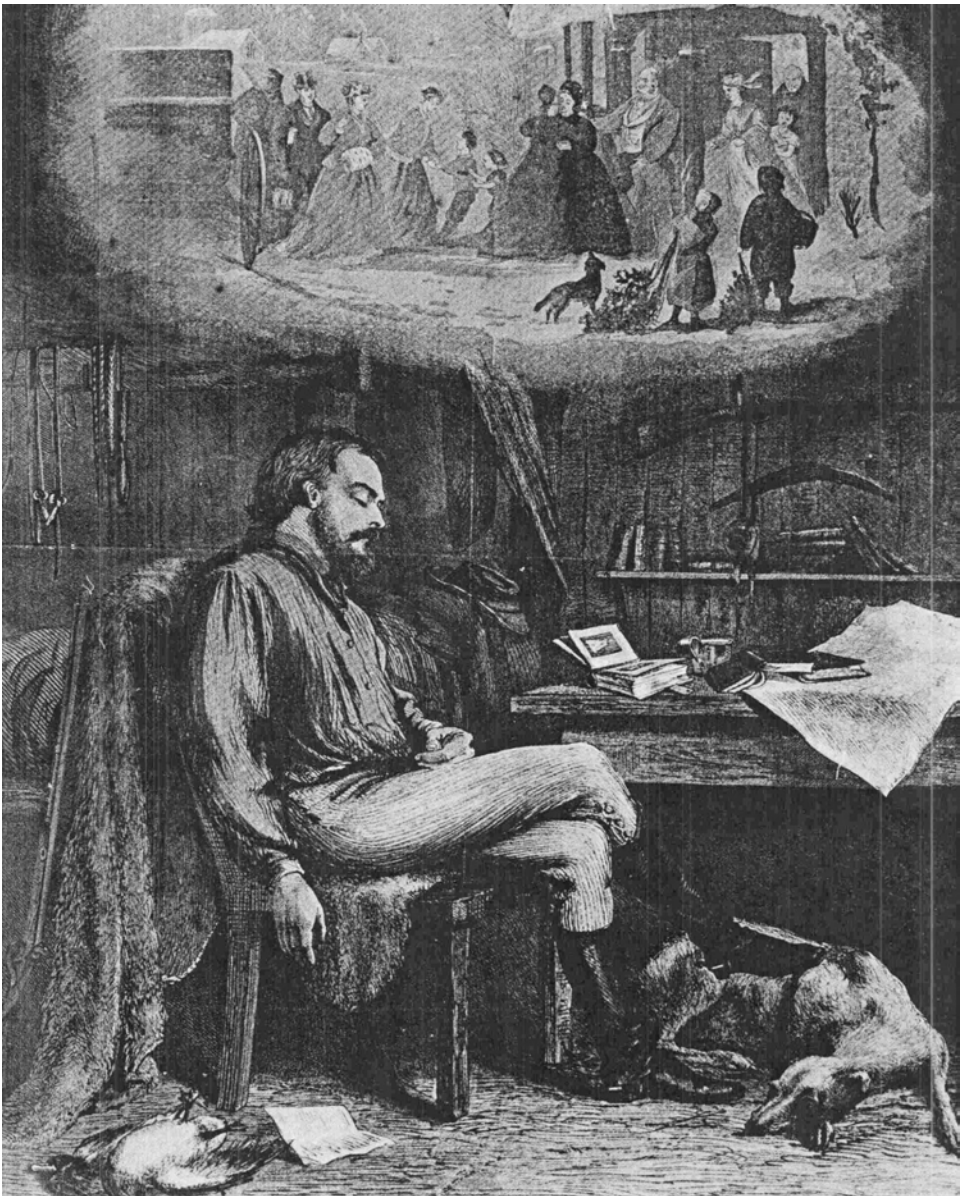


Figure 7.2 *The Bushman's Dream* (drawn by T. S. Cousens, engraved by S. Calvert).
The Illustrated Australian News. Colour supplement. December 1869

heading primarily to the United States. The outflows were unrestrained by the cumulative improvement in living standards in Britain, partly because the income differentials with destination countries widened throughout the age. Emigration became an expectation in most Irish families; it was also becoming a widespread habituation in the rest of the British Isles.

In the period 1853–94 almost eight million people left Britain and Ireland for destinations outside Europe; 52 per cent were English and Welsh, 10 per cent Scots and 38 per cent Irish. Two-thirds of all these people went to the United States, a tenth to Canada and 17 per cent to Australasia. The Irish were a large part of the swollen outflow, but their characteristics differed significantly from those from other parts of the British Isles. Irish emigration was much greater than natural population increase and accounted for much more than half the radical decline in the total Irish population. The emigrating Irish were much more attracted to the United States than to empire destinations.

For a few years in the 1850s Australia briefly rivalled the United States as the main destination in the British diaspora. The Australian gold rushes brought tens of thousands of young men, many financed by family and many returning home after their adventures. Nevertheless they altered the demography of Australia and brought glamour and attraction to the remote colonies, erasing much of the convict stain associated with the colonies in the British public mind. Gold and copper rushes in the middle decades of the nineteenth century in California, Alaska, South Africa and New Zealand also shook the normal patterns of migration.

Sometimes there was resistance in Britain to the outflow of so many of its skilled and unskilled workers and families. When a recruiter for the colony of New South Wales toured agricultural districts in Britain in the summer and autumn of 1861, he reported that he had achieved only tolerable success: ‘Our first impressions were of the existence of a strong feeling of opposition to emigration, among the landed gentry and the larger employers.’ There was also rivalry from Canada and other Australian colonies: ‘We find ourselves in the midst of a keen competition for the outflowing population of the mother Country, in which “free grants of land” are offered as prizes’ (Parkes and Dalley 1861: 777ff.).

There were many other occasions when employers and local and central authorities expressed their disquiet about the outflow of emigrants. But mainly emigration occurred in an atmosphere of indifference or neglect – there was little official interest in the flows of people except in the conviction that emigration was vital to the advance and furtherance of the empire. The imperial government consistently refused to finance emigration, though it encouraged colonial authorities to pursue and subsidise emigrants as vigorously as they wanted. In England itself there were many advocates of emigration. Darwin certainly regarded emigrants as carriers of the best of British civilisation (Darwin 2008: 265ff.). Similarly Ruskin enthused about the opportunities that emigration allowed for the full expression of working men’s aspirations (Ruskin 1906: 203–5).

Return migration was a central element in the experience of the Victorians overseas. Current estimates suggest that almost 40 per cent of English emigrants returned home in the years 1860 to 1914, which yields a total figure of at least two million returnees, each with first-hand knowledge of the colonies or the United States (Baines 1985: 128–40, 301–3). A portion of return migration was really

retirement migration, successful colonists coming home to exhibit their success, sometimes in the most conspicuous fashion. Return migrants were important conduits of imperial intelligence, familiarising the centre with the diaspora.

III

The scale and diversity of the migrant exodus made it the main carrier of British capital, energy, institutions, assumptions and attitudes to the outliers of the Victorian world. They were transplanted to hundreds of destinations and blossomed wildly amid a multitude of variants of their home origins. How this transmission was achieved is a critical question in the creation of pan-Victorianism. Emigrants were mainly unconscious agents of Victorianism; they were the inadvertent carriers of their culture, subsidiary to the practical requirements of emigration. First they had to make a new start and a living, often in the ‘exploding’ settlements of what James Belich describes as the ‘neo-Britains’. These people rarely articulated any self-appointed role as they crossed the oceans to these new destinations. The scale and heterogeneity of this vector population – people from every sector and region of the British Isles – was unlikely to produce uniform connections between home and abroad. Moreover the majority were voiceless, indeed barely literate, and left little account of their purpose or their motivations. They rarely spoke directly of their cultural agendas or grander notions of Victorianism across the world.

Nevertheless there were occasional overt expressions of broader philosophies at the heart of some of these expatriations. One such fully articulated ideal was institutionalised in the province of South Australia in the late 1830s. For this new colony, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, an economist of sorts, had devised an explicit model of the optimally transposed society issuing out of England. It was intended to replicate the tripartite structure of English rural society into their new Antipodean destination. It thus required a top stratum of capitalist landowners, an instant gentry, who would delegate their land to substantial farmers and managers who would then employ farm labourers. This structure was accompanied by a full panoply of churches, governing institutions, libraries, statistical and literary societies and so on. It also incorporated a mechanism that would perpetuate the structure by raising capital from land sales to be used to pay immigrants’ passages to convey the entire concept across the globe. Furthermore, it made principled provision for the native people, into whose lands the newly designed colony intruded (Foster *et al.* 2001: 2–5). In reality, a gap soon widened between the grand Wakefieldian designs and the colonial realities. But among the priorities was a commitment to religious liberality and proto-democratic representation, which stretched beyond the prevailing norms of Britain itself. Fresh starts in the colonies (and still more in the United States) created space and opportunity for innovative and unorthodox developments that stretched beyond the mere reproduction of British norms. On the frontiers of settlement, in the rushes for territory and minerals, the stretch was often ugly. Of colonial settlement in late eighteenth-century North America, Bernard Bailyn wrote: ‘Borderland violence and bizarre distensions of normal European culture patterns had become fused with a growing civility into a distinctive way of life’ (Bailyn 1987: 114). Such ‘distensions’ continued and were widely reproduced across the Victorian world.

By the 1830s emigration from Britain achieved a new degree of respectability, a sense of normality, which distinguished it from the taint of both convictism and indenturing that had dominated so much of the preceding century. Moreover, in the turmoil of the accelerated social, political and economic transformation in industrialising Britain itself, some of the so-called ‘nervous class’ found the idea of revitalisation overseas an increasingly attractive proposition. Families caught in declining absolute or relative circumstances – for instance in many parts of the rural sector after Waterloo – sought ways of recovering both income and status abroad. Mounting competition within British agriculture in mid century increased the suggestibility of farming families towards opportunities overseas. The social and economic composition widened cumulatively during these middle decades under the impact of better transport facilities, better information, reduced risk and greater confidence as emigration became increasingly familiar. This sense of security was enhanced by the mass of publications designed to reassure the prospective emigrant: guidebooks, newspapers, published emigrant letters, commercial propaganda, as well as the work of paid lecturers and shipping agents, all creating overwhelmingly positive publicity for emigration despite the disregard of government.

The remotest parts of the British Isles were bombarded with information and advice from abroad, all designed to overcome the reasonable suspicion of commercial and colonial publicity (Harper 1988: 45–79; Harper and Constantine 2010). Charles Dickens was one of many public figures lending his name to the persuasion of working- and middle-class emigration schemes that proliferated in the Victorian age. Chains of migration were well lubricated by remittances home, all part of the system of enticement and persuasion. George Blakiston Wilkinson typified the warm encouragement offered to working men in 1849:

They [new comers to Port Adelaide] seem to think that, after having left England so far behind them, they will, in the antipodes, find nothing resembling the old country. Here, however, at first landing, everything they see, puts them in mind of home. The houses and streets, the shipping, boats and vehicles, the men, women and children, all recall similar objects in old England. Familiar looking inns and shops, and genuine English barmaids, or shopmen, take one quite by surprise. The glass of beer drawn out of the London-made engine, the cheese, butter and bakers’ bread, the meat and vegetables, and, in fact, the *tout ensemble*, is English and comfortable.

(Wilkinson 1849: 17)

The most mobile and typical emigrants were young, male and single. But many departed in collective formation, usually in families. Some of them took with them their servants, their cattle, their offspring, their furniture, their architecture – in a fully conscious effort to replicate and revive their world. Often it turned out as a quixotic mission ending in tears. The pathetic story of the impecunious Highland chieftain Glengarry, in New South Wales in the 1830s, was a perfect example (Richards 2003: 33–49). Others were more successful – for instance, Sir Samuel Baker (1821–93) set up in Ceylon in 1846 as a planter in a positively manorial style of life, with several young couples with babies, a bailiff, a blacksmith, a groom, a thoroughbred stallion, a small pack of foxhounds, poultry, pigs, carriage

horses and choice breeds of cattle and sheep, as well as agricultural equipment and seed. He declared that ‘the church-bell sounds where the elephant trumpeted of yore’ (Baker 1891: 13–29, 374). In many other cases there was a quest to recover status, and to provide for the larger numbers of younger sons in expanding Victorian families. Such people paid special attention to the portable symbols of status, expressed in churches, schools, books, music and so on.

Of all Victorian rituals conveyed by emigrants across the globe the reinvention of Christmas proved the most transmissible. With its increasingly elaborate paraphernalia, both religious and secular, by mid century Christmas became a connector between home and destination: the new carols, the cards and present giving, yule logs, Christmas trees and dinners were part of the transit of everyday culture (Connolly 1999: [Chapter 4](#); Miall and Miall 1978: 151–59). Troops in the Khyber Pass as early as 1851, emigrants in South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, in India in the 1870s, and in the United States, all witnessed the slavish imitation of the Victorian ceremonials. They were adopted with some local variations, including the makeshift replications of the traditional Christmas in the outback, which never ceased to fascinate the Victorians back home (Stapleton and McDonald 1981). No less symbolic and portable was the imperial glorification of the Queen’s birthday, reported, for instance, from the regions of Lake Nyasa in 1890: merchants of the African Lakes Company marked their new territory by imprinting English and Scottish names on the landscape and celebrated the Queen in fully imported style (Stierstorfer 2006: I 179, xxxvii).

The emigrants from Britain did not usually create exclusive enclaves in which they replicated and amplified in detail all the traces of home – though there were more of these settlements than we might think (Van Vugt 2009: I xxi). Nor did the Victorian emigrants widely reproduce the tenant farming format of home agriculture, despite close approximations in some parts of the Anglo world. More common were settlements devoted to large-scale export staples, which were geared to the availability of only small amounts of scarce labour – for instance in sheep and cattle production dominated by large capitalist producers. Some of these large landholders eventually employed their winnings to build great houses, sometimes on a model of home, but mostly a new variant at ease with local conditions. These included grand homesteads in the outback, but others who attained success retreated to the city to express the true social fulfilment of their wealth. A substantial proportion of the successful colonists returned directly to Britain to parade their success in affluent and conspicuous retirement. On richer lands overseas conditions encouraged closer settlement and attracted independent farmers – the backbone of much farming in the Midwest of the United States and in many parts of Canada and Australia. It was here that the dream of independence for the emigrant was mainly fulfilled.

The annals of emigration in the nineteenth century were replete with stories of hope and success among people settled in new-found independence, dreams that were improbable in Britain. It was a notion of setting up one’s family on the land, without either landlord or employer to satisfy, or indeed the church, to achieve a generous subsistence, most notably for the future generation. It was an aspiration frequently contained within a rural dream, and which inspired the great quest for

land itself. Across the Victorian era this model eventually diminished – but it remained high in the consciousness of migrants late in the century – even though, increasingly, most emigrants moved from an urban/industrial place in Britain and resettled in similarly urbanised locations in the new worlds. The shift in the character of emigration was a long transition, and there were many categories of migrant who used colonial opportunities to escape urban industrialisation and mining in order to find a way back to the world that had been lost at home and could be reinvented overseas. Thus Cornish miners emigrated to new copper mining centres in North America and Australia – yet many soon opted out of mining to acquire land and independence, and escaped into the past (Richards 2011). Thus emigration became a means of breaking away from certain Victorian structures, out of the three-tiered rural system and also out of industrialism. The very act of emigration, it has been claimed, was a ‘political’ gesture (Erickson 1994: 46–47; Fender 1992: 64). Some emigrants were implicitly rejecting industrialisation in their yearnings for land and independence; they more certainly sought economic betterment.

Emigration, in practice, served manifold purposes not excluding a sense of protest against the changes that enveloped Britain in the Victorian era, a suggestion of escape from circumstances imposed upon people who found emigration a practical alternative to the new realities of British life. Thus emigration among rural people to New Zealand suggests a powerful ‘flight from the land’, people reacting against rural transformation in England, people differentially suggestible to the opportunities and propaganda of assisted emigration. According to one of their historians, ‘They left their village worlds when they saw factories and cities arising, and headed across the oceans for a new country where perhaps they could fulfil older hopes of a bit of land and profitable self-employment’ (Phillips and Hearn 2008: 106). This is a common but unratified assumption among historians: that negative conditions at home created the essential context for emigration, such as the loss of rural rights due to enclosure, evictions and clearance, the effect of industrialisation on the decline of rural crafts and domestic production, the impact of famine and machinery, the fear of dangerous working conditions and the dirt and disease of new towns and cities in the industrialising economy (Phillips and Hearn 2008: 21). On top of this may have been the impact of a ‘rural myth’, the yearning for the old and more wholesome life of the land (Erickson 1964). The potency of these notions seems to speak in opposition to Victorian culture, to resist change and to seek pre-industrial, pre-Victorian modes of life made possible in the alternative worlds of emigration.

The broad account of Victorian emigration includes examples of individual groups of migrants unambiguously bent on rural resettlement and resurgence. They were engaged in what J. S. Mill described as ‘experiments in living’ (Thomas 2009: 11). Striking examples are found in the New Zealand record. For instance, a body of Presbyterian Highlanders had left Wester Ross in 1815 for Cape Breton Island, where they set up a cohesive community of rural settlers dominated by the self-appointed church minister, Norman McLeod. Almost four decades later they felt the tightening grip of economic decline and potato famine. In response they built ships and re-emigrated en masse, first to seek settlement in southern Australia and

finally in the North Island of New Zealand. At Waipu they re-established their community, still led by McLeod and still bound to a rural life, their Presbyterianism now reinforced at the opposite side of the world (Richards 2003). At the end of the century, another even larger group of migrants – 3,000 ‘Albertland Baptists’ – sought a new model agricultural community in New Zealand. They included agricultural labourers and craftsmen, looking for cheap land and a brand new start (Phillips and Hearn 2008: 37–38). The long wide history of Victorian emigration contains numerous such restarts – many of them quasi-socialistic or theocratic in their inspiration – such as the ‘Clarionettes’, a group of Fabians led by William Ramstead of Cheshire, seeking their own ‘socialist Canaan’. Eventually 1,000 settlers in four ships reached New Zealand and later became influential in the creation of the New Zealand Socialist Party (Phillips and Hearn 2008: 47). These special semi-communal and collective emigrations thus carried public acclamations of their purposes and philosophies, and were evident from the very earliest days through Robert Owen and other idealists (Harrison 1969: 228–29) and into the Victorian era (Van Vugt 2009: IV xii–xv).

The common element in such emigrations was a return to the land and a recoil against industrialisation (Van Vugt 2009: IV 106). They created variants of the home culture, sometimes in diametric opposition to its central characteristics. Indeed the relationship of such migrations to Victorian culture was always ambiguous. After all, the determination to quit Britain, to resist its restraints and to seek new starts, was itself an expression of the dynamism of the home society. Emigrants departed with differing degrees of idealism and varying impulses to escape the past. All of this of course took place in a context of economic migration, people essentially on the make, seeking betterment and security, or recouping lost status. Their social experiments and their rebellions against convention were made feasible by the very security created beneath the naval, imperial and economic canopy of the Victorian world.

There was therefore a host of versions of expatriate life spread across the Anglo world, ranging from self-conscious replications of home to a bleak revulsion from Britain and the creation of entirely different new societies. Yet, rather than dreaming of such visions, most emigrants were consumed by practical immediate priorities, at least in the first instance, to resettle and establish a new stability to their existence. But even this required an act of faith, a belief in the capacity of the transposed society to secure such livelihood and stability – under the protection of institutions that were most likely to be British, even at an extreme distance from the centre of the Victorian world.

The social and cultural options in the minds of individual emigrants were best articulated (if at all) in their letters home. Their correspondence home provides mirrors of the Victorian world among those who departed and the conditions that precipitated their self-exile. At one extreme such testimony exposed the circumstances of people who had been made desperate by destitution and disaster; at the other were those who expressed their essential mood of adventure or insouciance. Most often, across all the categories, their letters evoked a sense of ambivalence about the past and the future of their own lives.

How did the Victorian world look from a distance, from the eyes of the expatriates, from its peripheries?

IV

Leaving England, or indeed anywhere else in the British Isles, was often associated with melancholy scenes of distress and despair, rarely with actual exultation. In their letters home emigrants overcame nostalgia and took a more considered perspective on the act of emigration. Writing home frequently evoked reflections on the world they had lost (or else relinquished), sometimes a summation of their lost culture. The act of leaving often accentuated the contrasts they drew between home and away, sometimes for rhetorical effect – to set their own emigration in the best light. On occasion these correspondents provide personal evocations of the shifting relationships between Britain and the overseas Victorian world, notably the persisting ‘commonality of Anglo-American culture’ both within the colonies and beyond (Van Vugt 2009: I xvi–xvii).

Certain matters recur in such letters. The pervasive aspiration towards economic betterment was central in virtually all emigrant correspondence across all places and periods, and it shaped most of the intercontinental dialogue. The Victorian emigrant transmitted the yearning for economic advance, often fired by perceptions of narrow opportunities at home. Also transmitted in many emigrant testimonies, especially in the early nineteenth century, was an unmistakeable sense of religious commitment, a religiosity that undoubtedly moulded the cultural exchange among the millions of emigrants. Religion was a high priority and expressed in words but also in deeds and actual sacrifices on arrival. One of the most impressive phenomena of so many new communities was the almost immediate dedication of land, energy and money to the transplantation and erection of churches and the importation of ministers, and the general paraphernalia of the myriad churches and sects conveyed by the migrants – often urged on by a competitive spirit too. Their letters home were suffused with religious sentiment that operated as a comforting reciprocation in many of the communications of the time, expressing the ‘shared Anglo-American tradition’, faith often propelling emigration itself. Their letters bear a constant invocation of the almighty; and they also speak of the very high priority they observed to recreate their church, to pour their earliest savings into constructing church buildings and infrastructure. These were possibly the most urgent, immediate and tangible markers of the transported culture from which they derived.

Another recurring theme throughout the Victorian years was the magnetic pull of land, people seeking independence even on the furthest frontiers, and skilled urban workers opting for farming at the first opportunity. There is evidence also of some modest clustering and solidarity among Scots and English settlers in the early nineteenth century, suggesting that their ‘ethnicity’ was more palpable than sometimes assumed. There is further rich testimony from working people in the raw business of pioneering, and miscellaneous commentary on life in America and the colonies. They offer perceptions of the home culture, a view from afar, reflections on Britain, snapshots of Victorian life.

This type of emigrant documentation exposes the diversity of experience among the human traffic of the Victorian age, and it occasionally allows entrée into the minds of the barely literate among the travelling proletariat in that traffic. Moreover migrants frequently offered explicit comparisons between Britain and their new

homes, usually to the latter's advantage and sometimes in the most astringent terms, especially in letters written by working people from Canada to England (Hill 2008: 24–42). An emigrant was prone to justify his or her decision to emigrate, leading them towards highly critical judgements on the land they had relinquished. Thus a migrant in Wisconsin in 1840 wrote home to the Channel Islands, 'May God bless Guernsey with all its slaves'; and a farmer railed against Lincolnshire landlords who had refused to reduce rents. In 1847 Henry Edward Price in Oswego, New York, celebrated his new place as a 'land of free born men who spurn oppressions thrall' – and it was clear that this was a radical rejection of what he had known in England (Erickson 1972: 233). Another English farmer in America, John Fisher, said he happily faced 'no *tythes* . . . no poor rates to take away the profits' (Erickson 1972: 122). The implicit denigration of England was unmistakable. It was an attitude satirised (and indeed dismissed) by Ford Madox Brown in whose picture of departing emigrants 'a reprobate shakes his fist with curses at the land of his birth, as though that were answerable for *his* want of success' (Brown 1865: 9).

Less negative but equally liberated sentiments echoed among labourers who did better in America and elsewhere across the emigrant world than at home. In 1882 it was reported from Kent County, Michigan:

[i]t is the facility with which folks become farmers here that creates and keeps up such a scarcity of farm labourers and domestic servants; they get good wages, and after a year or two either rent a cleared farm, or buy a wild piece of land with the intention of to make a farm of it, and settle down for life; soon in their turn becoming employers of labourers and servants.

It was a matter of supply and demand and thus, 'Farm labourers and female servants are treated here as though they belonged to their employer's family' (Van Vugt 2009: IV 77–78).

Jibes against former landlords and their social domination recur in letters from across the emigrant world. But it was neither universal nor uniform. Among a selection of Irish emigrants in Australia, such testimonies tended to avoid general observations on old Ireland; they sparked no considered denunciation, nor even much derision, of their previous landlords to whom they were broadly positive in attitude. Their letters, back and forth, to Ireland were remarkably free from sectarian animosity, surprisingly benign in tone and made little reference to politics or even foreign wars (Fitzpatrick 1995: 535, 553, 536). More broadly based collections of migrant testimonies bring to light many former Englishmen who were emphatically prepared to denounce their old society. An emigrant in the United States in 1871 asked rhetorically: 'Is a farmer [in England] justified in paying rent for the use of another man's land, when a single year's rental will purchase the freehold of a farm, vastly more fertile, in Minnesota or other parts of the new North-West?' (Van Vugt 2009: IV 273).

Migrants responded to every aspect of life in their new worlds: the domestic qualities of their new lives, the way their dead were buried, their drinking habits, religion, brewing methods, dress, hats, language, insects, soil, ice cream, air pollution and the 'natives'. Most of all, in their recurring themes, they examined

the effect of their own extraordinary mobility, their escape, on the character of their social existence, in the living culture of ordinary people. Mark Girouard tells us that one particular value encapsulated the essence of Victorianism – to be found at all levels in all classes and throughout the ‘Victorian period – ‘This is the belief in social hierarchy, the resulting deference which this led to in those who were not at the top of the hierarchy, and the automatic assumption of the right to lead by those who were’ (Girouard 1992: 60). Class, indeed, was the element of ‘Victorianism’ that attracted most observation in the migrants’ correspondence with home.

Independence was heightened further in the frenetic atmosphere found on the emigrant frontiers and the goldfields. In Australia, Thomas Woolner contrasted the outward similarities with home with the inversion of social attitudes: ‘One can scarcely tell without looking closely he [the newly arrived immigrant] is not in England. Everything seems arranged much in the same way: the people are the chief difference. They mostly wear beards, carry firearms and are immensely independent . . . much of that loose air and swagger . . .’. Woolner added: ‘Nature and Custom are topsy-turvy in this country . . . The man of labor only buys the luxuries of life, and servants rule their masters who bow down and flatter them: such is the power of Gold . . .’ (Woolner 1917: 18–19).

Emigrants celebrated the liberation they felt from poverty and dependence, which they emphatically regarded as the defining mode of life in England, whatever else they retained in terms of the psychic culture of their lost Victorian worlds. Hugh Nudham from Ohio told his kinsfolk in Staplehurst in Kent that they would now find him ‘on a farm of their own without perplexing landlords and oppressive parsons and taxes’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 51). He conjured up a world from which he had departed, all constraint and social limitations. As Le Prevost from Guernsey put it: ‘In America there is no distinction – a poor man is as much respected as the richest – behaviour causes the liberty and equality’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 90). Britain therefore was the antithesis, a narrowed constricted culture, the opposite of America. Hugh Nudham tried to encapsulate the difference: ‘Your child will take their own way here [in the United States]. They feel their independence soon after they get here and will be for themselves without their parents. In some respects it is a blessing, in some not’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 51).

Non-migrants, left behind in Britain, sometimes felt the brunt of the mockery of their kinsfolk abroad. It allowed some good-natured taunting of those who stayed at home – suggesting that they suffered from inertia or a lack of adventure. For instance Benjamin Boyce, a young accidental emigrant from Lincolnshire who travelled to South Australia in 1838, made fun of those who kept their mother’s hearth (Richards 1974: 65–75). Similarly Henry Craig, in Ohio City, remarked: ‘Some of you told me you would rather starve at home than come here. What poor weak-minded beings to live in a world of plenty and afraid to move after it’ (Van Vugt 2009: III 97). George and Orange Slade in 1841 wrote back from Ohio to their brother in Devon and urged him: ‘. . . do pluck up your spirits and come away . . . And you must mind and bring your fiddle with you . . . Our children are growing verry [sic] fast. And they do not wish to see England again’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 124).

Across the British world there were many concentrations of incoming migrants, many of whom travelled in families along chains of local connections. There were groups, for instance, of Channel Islanders in parts of Australia, of Cornish miners in Colorado and Cape Town, many Manx in Cleveland, Ohio, Orkney folk in New Zealand. But mostly, as the receiving societies expanded, the British immigrants were swallowed into their cities and towns, or spread outwards to the frontiers, eventually even into East Africa and the remotest corners of three continents. Emigrants from Victorian Britain tended to disperse, in some places almost invisibly. In the mid-nineteenth century most went to North America where they mostly avoided any coherent transplantation of their old culture in all its detail. Despite exceptions, the incoming British were struck by the differences from home, and they alerted prospective kinsfolk of the challenges they might confront if they followed in their wake.

Most emigrants, mainly because they moved within an Anglophone world, transplanted relatively easily, following their hopes of betterment but also crystallizing their philosophy of migration. Some, such as Titus Crawshaw, a wool finisher from Huddersfield who emigrated to Wisconsin in 1854 seeking his own farm, believed he was escaping urbanisation and industry, attempting to realise ‘the vestigial agrarian dream’ (Erickson 1972: 235). As Erickson put it: ‘Immigrants who made their way west of the Appalachians were deliberately seeking out a less developed economy and less complex society than that which they left’ (Erickson 1972: 16).

The global dialogue with the distant emigrants spoke of the everyday culture as perceived and expressed in the popular mind. Amid the accentuated contrasts drawn by such migrants, the commonest refrain was that of independence, evidently a great Victorian aspiration but mostly unavailable in Britain itself. ‘Jack’ and his ‘Master’ were the two most reported characters featured across this genre of correspondence.

Even disappointed emigrants, unhappy with the economic returns on their great decision to emigrate, conceded the psychic benefits of migration. They tended to concentrate their thoughts on those aspects of the home country that they were most enthusiastic to leave behind. As Mathew Willis wrote home to Wensleydale from Iowa County in Wisconsin, ‘we have one advantage here, we can have land of our own to cultivate and improve. And there is a peculiar pleasure, I confess, in working upon ones [sic] own soil’ (Van Vugt 2009: III 76). Emigrants, in their unofficial dialogue with the homeland, felt free to indulge their own critiques of their forsaken cultures. And so Andrew Mattison deplored ‘the wretched state of my native land’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 145), and James Clarke, writing from Liverpool, agreed with his kinsfolk in the United States that England was degenerating until ‘there will only be two classes, the aristocracy of wealth with the million slaves’. His evaluation was directed to the spread of industry in Victorian England, for he would ‘sometimes blush at the debasement of humanity as exhibited in those modern hills the manufactory’s [sic] of England’ which he associated with the destruction of ‘the liberties of the labouring population’ (Van Vugt 2009: II 128).

V

The human traffic of the Victorians continued to change as the ease of oceanic transport improved and their affluence began to express itself in mobility for its own sake – most symptomatically in the rise of popular tourism. At the level of proletarian migration, there was a growth in return migration even while the volume of outward migration swelled in the last decades of Victoria. Increasingly migrants came to regard their departures less as exile and more as an extra dimension of their own world of work. It became merely an extension of mobility within Victorian Britain. Thus, for instance, Robert Lowe and Robert Applegarth, British trade unionists who migrated between both the United States and Australia, regarded emigration as a natural extrapolation of the employment opportunities at home and a beneficial widening of opportunities for British workers. Applegarth's union praised emigration 'as a prudent means of getting on in the world', and America was regarded as the natural destination of 'the surplus of a growing English population'. Social mobility was greatly enhanced by the escape hatch of emigration (Briggs 1965: 180). Robert Lowe was in New South Wales from 1842 to 1850, where he thundered against the 'petty aristocracy', and the 'parasites and sycophants' who surrounded the governor as well as the Colonial Office that continued to foist convicts on the colonies (Briggs 1965: 252). But he later turned against Australia's 'mob' democracy, perhaps displaying the limits of the migrant psychology.

The act of emigration shaped the minds of those leaving Britain. But they had been suggestible even before they departed; they were self-selected for change and a literal and cultural distancing from the norms of home. The new environments into which they entered were transformative even upon the most dyed-in-the-wool emigrant. They generally became Americans, South Africans and Australians. It may well be that 'They change their clime, but not their minds . . . who rush across the sea' (Horace 1929: I, 11), but the minds of Victorian emigrants were already moulded to an alternative future. The Victorians, more than most emigrants in modern history, were confident of their capacity to confront and change the new worlds they appropriated. But, as many of them testified, they were also prepared to leave behind much of their home culture, most notably its class markers and the perceived consequences of industrialism.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

VARIETIES OF NATIONALISM



Krishan Kumar

NATIONALISM: HISTORY AND TYPOLOGY

Nationalism is evidently an international phenomenon. This shows expressly in the ideology of nationalism, which declares that *all* nations have the right to their own nation-state. Nationalism looks forward to a new international order, a *world* of nation-states. That is why early advocates of nationalism, such as Mazzini, were convinced and committed internationalists. Nationhood was a stepping stone, necessary but by itself incomplete, towards the embrace of all humanity. ‘In laboring according to true principles for our Country’, declared Mazzini, ‘we are laboring for Humanity; our Country is the fulcrum of the lever which we have to wield for the common good’ (Mazzini 1907: 54–55; see also Bayly and Biagini 2008). Mazzini aspired to a world linked by acceptance of the universal principle of nationalism, a world in which nations – however small – would deal with each other on equal terms, and would recognize each other’s right to existence. Nationalism could not apply simply to one nation, or any set of nations, seen in isolation. It was a universalist ideology, as universalist as the cosmopolitan ideologies of the Enlightenment.

But there was always the danger that, despite the premise of equality, nationalism would be distorted into a form of great power politics. If each nation was unique, might not one or some be superior to the others, entitled therefore to rule over them? The language of ‘greater’ and ‘lesser’ nations, of nations with and without ‘history’, of ‘civilized’ and ‘backward’ nations, lay only too readily to hand in the stadial and evolutionary philosophies of history that were rampant in the nineteenth century (see e.g. Burrow 1966). Hence it was that in the late nineteenth century nationalism could mutate, as J. A. Hobson mourned, into imperialism, in its modern guise. The “new imperialism” of the late nineteenth century was a form of hypertrophied nationalism that perverted both the universalism of the older empires and the equality and internationalism of the true spirit of nationalism. ‘Nationalism is the plain highway to internationalism, and if it manifests divergence we may well suspect a perversion of its nature and purpose. Such a perversion is Imperialism, in which nations trespassing beyond the limits of facile assimilation transform the

wholesome stimulative rivalry of varied national types into the cut-throat struggle of competing empires' (Hobson 1988: 11).

One part of the story of nationalism in the nineteenth century, therefore, is the movement from a hopeful, 'progressive', liberal form of nationalism in the earlier period to a more virulent, violent and authoritarian form in the latter part of the century (Mommsen 1990). Such a development can be said to have culminated in the murderous nationalism of Fascism and Nazism in the 1920s and 1930s (Zimmer 2003). 'Third World nationalism', in the second half of the twentieth century, did something to rescue nationalism from the depths into which it had been plunged by the Italian and German experiences, but more recent expressions in Yugoslavia and elsewhere have revived the feeling that nationalism is too dangerous a principle to be allowed to run riot in the world.

Such a historical trajectory is indeed one way of establishing a typology of nationalism, as 'Risorgimento' or 'liberal nationalism', 'reform nationalism', 'imperial nationalism', 'integral nationalism' etc. (cf. Alter 1994: 16–38). The danger here is that each type is seen as succeeding each other, in strict historical progression, rather than being taken as 'ideal types', which, though carrying specific historical associations, can also be considered as varying forms that can in principle arise at different times and in different places. Thus liberal or 'Risorgimento' nationalism, originating in the 'Young Italy' and 'Young Europe' movements of the early nineteenth century, might also be said to characterize the nationalism of liberal democracies such as Britain and the US in the twentieth century, especially at such critical moments as the Second World War. Authoritarian or 'integral' nationalism might be said to be found not just in the Pan-German or 'Young Turk' movements of the 1890s and 1900s, or among right-wing and fascist movements of the interwar period, but also, say, in Serbian and Croatia nationalism of the 1990s, or Russian nationalism of the early twenty-first century. Both types are generally and rightly thought of as nineteenth-century inventions, but their historical origin does not limit their applicability to a wider field of nationalist expressions.

Interestingly another common and even better-known way of typologizing nationalism also has fairly distinct historical origins. It has become standard in the literature to refer to 'civic' and 'ethnic' conceptions of nationhood, giving rise to corresponding and competing types of nationalism. One of the earliest accounts of this can be found in the German historian Friedrich Meinecke's *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, first published in 1907. Meinecke there distinguished between 'cultural nations' (*Kulturnationen*) and 'political nations' (*Staatsnationen*), between, that is, 'nations that are primarily based on some jointly experienced cultural heritage and nations that are primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution' (Meinecke 1970: 10). Though not exactly mapping onto one another, this distinction has come to be generalized as one between ethnic and civic nations – the former emphasizing common cultural and historical traditions, sometimes tinged with racialism, the latter stressing common political traditions and political membership, especially citizenship and political participation (see Kumar 2003: 21–28).

Meinecke was as aware as anyone of his generation what the concrete and historical referents of these two types were: the French and German nations as they had developed since the French Revolution. The French clearly exemplified the political

or civic kind, the Germans – lacking a common state or political form for much of their history – the cultural or ethnic kind. The Franco-Prussian War of 1871 had sharpened the contrast, which was sustained by the bitter enmity between the two countries in the period up to the First World War. The loss of Alsace-Lorraine rankled particularly with the French. This was the context of the famous lecture at the Sorbonne given by Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’ (1882). The pointed implications of that general discussion were that, whatever the cultural or historical traditions of the region, since the citizens of Alsace-Lorraine were clearly committed to French rather than German membership, Alsace-Lorraine belonged to the French and not the German nation – a nation being, in Renan’s famous phrase, ‘a daily plebiscite’, ‘the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life’ (Renan 1990: 19). In Renan even more than in Meinecke, a particular historical experience found expression in sharply contrasting analytical types.

In a masterly study, Rogers Brubaker (1992) has used the French and German examples to explicate the differences between the civic and ethnic types of nationhood. He shows clearly how the different historical trajectories of the two countries have led to these differing conceptions of the nation; but he is not averse to abstracting from those particular histories to generalize about types of nationhood, available as models for present and future nations and nation-states (see similarly Ignatieff 1994). A similar abstraction, based equally on a determinate history, was attempted earlier by Hans Kohn (2005: 329–34; 1965). Kohn too was concerned with distinguishing between ethnic and civic concepts of the nation. But he cast his historical net wider, arguing that the civic concept could be identified as a ‘Western’ type, linked to the historical development of Western European countries such as Britain, France, Spain and the Netherlands, while the ethnic concept was of an ‘Eastern’ variety, arising out of the historical experience of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Once more history led to typology, but now the units were plural rather than singular, and indeed could be globalized without too much difficulty – so that, for instance, American and Canadian nationhood could readily be identified as the Western type, while Japanese nationhood – at least up to the Second World War – seemed to point as clearly in an Easternly direction. Just so that there is no question of geographical determinism here, Indian nationalism can be seen – at least in the self-conception of many Indian nationalists such as Nehru and Gandhi – as being of the inclusive ‘Western’ type, while Italian and Iberian nationalism have at various times taken on a distinctly ‘Eastern’ hue.

We are dealing here of course, as all theorists recognize, with ‘ideal types’, not actual examples as we encounter them historically or in the present. Few cases are pure instances of one or other type; all are mixtures in varying degrees. But nevertheless most students of nationalism have continued to find the typology helpful, since the ideal types do sufficiently approximate to the instances of nationalism that have appeared in the past two centuries (see e.g. Greenfeld 1992; Sugar and Lederer 1994; Baycroft and Hewitson 2006). Typologies without history are worthless; but so long as we recognize the historical specificities of particular examples, the analytical constructs that typologies make possible can be valuable heuristic devices.

One further point needs to be made, by way of introduction. The nineteenth century was indeed, as in the conventional textbook treatment, the ‘age of nationalism’. Whether or not there were ‘nations before nationalism’, there was certainly no ideology of nationalism before roughly the time of the French Revolution.¹ The idea that states should correspond to ‘nations’ – assuming that anyone could agree on what constituted the ‘nation’ – would have seemed bizarre to most of the ruling elites of Europe at any time before that. The principle that nationalism proclaims, of ‘one nation, one state’, would have seemed an absurdity in the ‘composite monarchies’, multinational empires and dynastic states that made up the vast majority of European polities before the nineteenth century, for the kinds of reasons that Ernest Gellner (2006) spelt out so powerfully. So the coming of nationalism in the nineteenth century did indeed bring in something new, something that was to have a profound effect on the states and societies that experienced it.

But if the ideology of nationalism arrived spectacularly in the nineteenth century, this does not mean that *nation-states* make up the substance of nineteenth-century history, nor even that nationalism as a principle swept all before it. What we have to recognize, and what is still not sufficiently acknowledged, is that *empires*, with their quite different principles, persisted throughout the nineteenth century and well beyond (Kumar 2010a). A moment’s reflection makes this obvious. What were the principal actors on the world stage in the nineteenth century but empires – Britain, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman empire? Towards the end of the century the new states of Italy and Germany threw themselves into the imperial scramble, to be joined by the rising power of Japan in the East. Later still the Soviet Union and the United States added themselves to the list of imperial powers, the latter two vying for control of the world in the second half of the twentieth century. If therefore ‘the age of nationalism’ sums up one aspect of the nineteenth century, the ‘age of empire’ must surely also be invoked as a necessary complement and reminder of what the history of the nineteenth century actually entailed (cf. Hobsbawm 1987).

Nationalism, as we shall see, evolved in tandem with imperialism. One might even go so far as to say that imperialism invented nationalism – or, if that thought is too extreme, that empires provided the necessary conditions and established the conducive framework for the rise of nationalist movements and the creation of nation-states. Moreover the familiar trope, ‘from empire to nation-state’, hides more than it reveals. Empires accompanied nationalism for most of its history, and were there even at the moment of what seemed its final triumph, in the anticolonial movements of the ‘Third World’ in the period after the Second World War. Entities so persistent are hardly likely to have disappeared permanently from human affairs. Empires and nation-states remain competing forms of the political imagination (Burbank and Cooper 2010: 443–59).

NATIONALISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Nationalism, once invented in the course of the French Revolution, achieved runaway popularity in nineteenth-century Europe. This was probably connected to what Benedict Anderson calls the ‘community’ aspect of the idea of the nation,

such that, ‘regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 2006: 7). Nationalism was an offshoot of the egalitarianism that was a central feature of the principles of the French Revolution. There is an assumption of a fundamental equality between all members of a nation, whether formally citizens or not. Moreover, as Anderson suggests, this is an equality that goes beyond the merely formal or legal. It refers also to something like an emotional bond linking all members of the nation. A nation is in this respect akin to a family (even if, as George Orwell said of England, the wrong members are sometimes in control). As Europe industrialized with increasing speed in the nineteenth century, as local communities were disrupted and the vast movement from the countryside to the towns set in, it was not surprising that the nation could offer itself as a substitute community, albeit one that was not face-to-face but ‘imagined’.

It is important to see that this applies as much to ‘civic’ conceptions of the nation as it more obviously does in the case of ‘ethnic’ conceptions. There is a tendency to think of civic nationalism as thin and unemotional, an expression of a merely political or constitutional commitment to the nation. The example is often given of the United States, a prime case of the civic nation since it is made up of so many different ethnicities. But as Bernard Yack has persuasively argued, there is nothing thin or unemotional about Americans’ attachment to their nation – something that was very obvious to anyone who happened to be in the United States after the attacks of 11 September 2001. Civic conceptions of the nation, Yack argues, as much as ethnic ones, rest on ‘an inheritance of distinctive experiences and cultural memories that is an inseparable part of every national political identity’ (Yack 1999: 106). France – another much cited example of civic nationhood – as much as America looks back to the crucial foundational experiences of its Great Revolution and its subsequent vicissitudes for the symbolic and emotional resources that cement its commitment to a civic ideal of the nation.

We might consider the example of Englishness and Britishness in the nineteenth century as a further way of illuminating this point. Britishness is often thought of as merely a ‘state’ identity, deriving from British citizenship and resting largely on political, legal and institutional foundations. As compared with the ‘emotional weight’ carried by Englishness, Scottishness, etc., says Bernard Crick, Britishness is primarily related to ‘legal allegiance’ (Crick 2009: 151). It lacks the cultural substance of the other national identities (‘I can find no folk songs in the last great age of folk songs that hail Britain or Britannia’) and may indeed not ‘correspond to any real sense of nation’ at all (Crick 1991: 97). For many commentators British identity is a ‘transnational’ or ‘supranational’ identity embracing the nations of England, Scotland, Wales and (formerly) Ireland. If it can be considered a national identity at all, it has to be seen as at most a ‘civic’ identity, legal and political, not as an ‘ethnic’ identity, deep and emotional, of the kind that characterizes Englishness or Scottishness.²

By common consent, the making of a British identity was an eighteenth-century enterprise, following the Act of Union with Scotland (1707) and the creation of the United Kingdom. But how far was it a *national* identity, the result of the making of a British *nation*? Linda Colley, who has given us the fullest account of the process, has recently summed up her view as follows: ‘Although Britishness,

as an idea and a set of loyalties, can be seen as emerging markedly from at least the eighteenth century, it was superimposed over, and had to co-exist with other identities, in a partial and sometimes untidy fashion' (Colley 2009: 21; cf. 1992b). Hence for her, as for other scholars (e.g. McCrone 1997), Britishness has been a thin and to some extent a strategic identity, a 'top-down' identity constructed by political elites in the interests of maintaining the political unity of the United Kingdom. It has never really engaged the bulk of the population, for whom being British was an 'official' identity, a matter of citizenship and passports. Thus, they say, we should not be surprised that, following the devolution measures of the 1990s, and with the resurgence of Scottish and, to an extent, English nationalism, Britishness is losing its appeal for large numbers of the population of the United Kingdom (see, for a critical discussion of this view, Kumar 2010b).

But was British identity, even if it is characterized as civic, so thin and undernourished? Consider what it involved, over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ A common parliament, embracing the Irish after the Act of Union of 1801. A common monarchy, which under Victoria and Albert especially went out of its way to emphasize its British dimension, with palaces in Edinburgh (Holyrood) and the Scottish Highlands (Balmoral), and a son and heir designated the 'Prince of Wales'. A unified set of armed forces, which while on occasion exploiting national differences – e.g. the Welsh Fusiliers, the Scottish Highland regiments – was on the whole one of the strongest forces for a pan-British identity. A common religion, Protestantism, which while it was of course divisive in Ireland, with its Catholic majority, nevertheless acted as a powerful cement for the bulk of the population of the United Kingdom, including a significant minority of Irish Protestants – perhaps the most British of all subjects.

Then there were language, literature and law. Admittedly these carried a strong English flavour – the English language, a literature in which the canonical works of English literature, from Chaucer to Dickens, became the treasure of all the educated classes of Britain, and a legal system heavily inflected – even in the separate Scottish legal system – by English Common Law. But it is a common feature of many national identities for the culture of a particular region to become the dominant one in the nation – e.g. the Paris region in the case of French identity, Tuscany in the case of the Italians. That English culture, the culture of the richest and most populous part of Britain, should come to play so prominent a role in British identity, should not surprise us, nor does it mean that it could not form the core of a British identity (just as Latin culture came to predominate in the Roman empire, with its many ethnicities and nationalities, forming a common Roman identity). It is of course the source of the common confusion, or conflation, on the part of the English of Englishness with Britishness ('for Wales, see England', as the notorious entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* put it). We shall come to that in a moment. Here we simply need to note the evolution of a common culture that, without displacing regional or other national cultures – Welsh, Scottish, Irish – came to bind together the peoples of the United Kingdom.⁴

Last but not least we should note the British Empire. In the nineteenth century, it can be argued, the empire became the most important source of British national identity. All the peoples of the United Kingdom – as settlers, soldiers, scholars, traders, missionaries, educators, engineers, administrators – shared in it, the Scots

to a quite disproportionate extent (Colley 1992a: 117–32; Mackenzie 1993; Kidd 2003: 882).⁵ It was a source of common pride, emblematic of Britain as the world's richest and most powerful nation. It provided a sense of a common mission, a 'civilizing mission', seen as the diffusion of a common British way of life across large sectors of the globe. And while once again, as in the United Kingdom itself, English culture and institutions formed the core of that missionary sense, the carriers of that culture were in no way restricted to the English but were unmistakably also from other parts of the UK – David Livingstone, the great Scottish missionary, being perhaps the most famous example. The empire was a fount of Britishness, spreading British ways across the globe, but also bringing back to Britain a varied set of experiences of all classes and groups from the United Kingdom. Such experiences of empire profoundly modified national identities in the British Isles; and in this case there could be no doubting that this was a unifying *British* experience, for while it was common to use 'England' as a synecdoche for the whole of Britain, for the overwhelming majority of people, at home and abroad, the empire was the British, not the English, Empire. Whatever else might divide the peoples of the United Kingdom, the empire supplied a crucial commonality.

There was a further way in which empire served to shore up Britishness. It did so by creating a 'Britannic' identity not just within the British Isles but also across broad swathes of the empire (Bridge and Fedorowich 2003; Buckner and Francis 2005; Darwin 2009: 144–79). Scots, Welsh, Irish and English in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa – the 'white dominions' – emphasized their British identity even more than their counterparts in the home country (a familiar aspect of 'diasporic nationalism'). Their common perceptions of indigenous peoples, their need to find a common bond in the face of a hard and often hostile environment, the encounter with other imperial peoples – French, Spanish, Russian – as competitors and potential conquerors, solidified their sense of Britishness. They saw themselves as part of 'Greater Britain', an idea championed at home by powerful public intellectuals and scholars such as Sir Charles Dilke, J. A. Froude, and J. R. Seeley (Bell 2007). For the settlers a British identity can almost be said to have been an existential necessity, in the face of extreme environmental conditions and as the means of finding common ground between peoples of different religions and ethnicities widely scattered across vast terrains. For the people at home 'Greater Britain' was the bond that linked them to their kith and kin overseas, as well as a source of pride as a demonstration of the vitality and global reach of British culture.⁶ For both sides Britishness provided a sense of a common 'British world', a shared identity that also seemingly enshrined a shared destiny – whether in the British Empire as currently constituted or, as some both in the colonies and at home hoped, in some future 'Imperial Federation' of more or less equal partners (Bell 2007: 92–119).

It is hard to say, given all this, that Britishness was any less an identity, or any less compelling, for a great variety of people in Britain and overseas, than Englishness, Scottishness, etc. The obverse of this was a curious asymmetry among national identities in the United Kingdom itself. Irish, Scots and Welsh discovered or rediscovered their national identities at various points in the nineteenth century, with the Irish leading the way under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell. Partly this was in response to the general growth of nationalist doctrines and movements

in Europe, to which Britain was not immune. Every self-respecting nation was supposed to have its own culture, its own 'soul'. Especially in the face of the obvious dominance of the English, the so-called 'Celtic' nations of the British Isles felt the need to assert their own character and distinctiveness, though only in the case of Ireland did this represent a threat to the unity of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century.

But for the English the case was very different. As the presiding power not just in the United Kingdom but in the overseas empire – being in that sense doubly imperial – the English were not under the same pressure to define a national identity. More than that it would, in the context of imperial rule, have been highly impolitic to do so. Imperial nations, precisely because they are imperial nations, have reason to play down their own nationalism, in the interests of maintaining control over multinational entities (Kumar 2000). For the English to have trumpeted their own national identity would have been to risk offending the many other nations who were *de facto* under their rule.

Hence it was that in nineteenth-century Britain, English identity was of all national identities in the British Isles the least defined and the least prominent. There was certainly considerable discussion of the concept of the nation, and what the relationship of the individual to the nation should be, and that of nations to each other. But as several scholars have shown, this rarely resulted in anything that can truly be called English nationalism. For most of the nineteenth century, English thinkers held to what has been called a 'civilizational' perspective, one that emphasized the unity of mankind while arguing that different countries and regions may be at different stages of development, and therefore it behoved the more advanced nations to aid the progress of more backward nations up the ladder of civilization (Mandler 2000; 2006: 27–58). Hence the justification by liberals, such as John Stuart Mill and others, of the British Empire (Pitts 2005: 123–62). Even where the argument for some form of patriotism – usually preferred to the term 'nationalism' in the English case – was made, it was nearly always seen as constrained by the need not simply to respect the rights of other nations but by the requirement that it conform to the higher demands of humanity as a whole. English thinkers, in other words, generally shared Mazzini's belief that patriotism and nationalism were valuable mainly as a means of connecting individuals with the wider life of the species – whether that was seen in terms of the Comtean 'Religion of Humanity' or, as was argued by liberal Anglicans such as F. D. Maurice and Matthew Arnold, through the agency of an established national church (Jones 2006; Varouxakis 2006).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, something that we may call English cultural nationalism did emerge.⁷ This focused on the English countryside, the glories of English literature, the distinctive qualities of English art and architecture, England's fortunate political inheritance (the 'Whig interpretation' of English history) (Kumar 2003: 202–25). But this 'moment of Englishness' carried with it little of the political overtones of nationalism (cf. Mandler 2005: 365). Once again considerations of empire were paramount. With the Irish question fiercely debated, and Welsh and Scottish nationalism on the rise, this was a time for the English to stress a common Britishness, not to insist on English distinctiveness. Similarly with the overseas empire, the rise of Indian nationalism and an increasing consciousness

of their own character among the settler communities of the Dominions were equally good reasons for elaborating the common elements of a 'Britannic' identity, and to promise even non-European populations a measure of self-rule and equal citizenship in the not too distant future. English nationalism, if it were ever to develop, would have to wait.

NATION AND EMPIRE

'The object [of colonization]', declared William Gladstone in 1858, 'was to reproduce the likeness of England, as they were doing in Australia, New Zealand, North America and the Cape, thereby contributing to the general happiness of mankind' (in Darwin 2009: 146). J. R. Seeley simply referred to the British settlement colonies, together with the peoples of Great Britain, as 'a vast English nation' (Seeley 1971: 63). Both Gladstone and Seeley here made the usual conflation of England and Britain. For the English, who had as it were submerged their identity in the larger British project, both at home and overseas, the distinction was immaterial – especially as so many others, Britons as much as foreigners, made the same equation. More accurate, in terms of the actual national identity it referred to, was the passionate declaration of the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada, Sir John Macdonald: 'A British subject I was born, a British subject I shall die' (in Darwin 2009: 152).

The congruity and overlap of identities in England, Britain and the British Empire serves to remind us of the close connection between nation and empire. John Darwin speaks in the British case of a 'symbiotic' relationship between the two, and argues that "imperialism" and "nationalism" were the two faces of a single identity' (Darwin 2009: 166, 169). How far was this true elsewhere in the nineteenth century? Nation or nation-state is so often pitted against empire, nationalism against imperialism. The fact that so many empires came crashing down during and after the First World War, and that so many nation-states arose on their ruins (as was the case again after the Second World War) has led not unreasonably to the view that it was nationalism that destroyed empires. But not only is there a worrying *post hoc, propter hoc* quality to this position: it can also be argued that nationalism was itself shaped by empire, and that the two have indeed accompanied each other, in an uneasy but not necessarily irreconcilable relationship, for much of their history.

One can make only brief observations here (for a more detailed discussion, see Kumar 2010a). For the 'imperial nations', such as the English/British, the Russians, the French, the Germans (both in Austria-Hungary and in Germany after 1870) and – though less clearly – the Turks in the Ottoman Empire, the connection is easier to show. Empire endowed these nations with a special sense of themselves, a feeling that they were the carriers of a particular mission, whether it was Protestantism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam or simply '*la mission civilisatrice*' (Kumar 2000; 2006). This was a form of 'imperial nationalism', or 'Great Power nationalism', that was immeasurably heightened by the global competition for space and power in the late nineteenth century (the 'scramble for Africa', etc.). To remain in the race for power and influence, a nation must strive for empire. Imperialism, as the great British imperialist Lord Curzon put it in 1898, is everywhere becoming

‘the faith of a nation’ (Nicolson 1939: 13). ‘Imperialism and nationalism’, says Chris Bayly, ‘reacted on each other to redivide the world and its people’ (Bayly 2004: 242).

But for the subject peoples too, empire could provide the stimulus to national feeling. This was not only in the obvious form of a *reaction* to empire – such as for instance Polish nationalism in the Russian Empire – but more interestingly of the way in which imperial developments shaped the growth and development of nationalist movements. We already have a splendid model for this in Anil Seal’s study (1968) of the emergence of the Indian nationalist movement within the context of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century, and his later account (Seal 1973) of how at virtually every stage of its growth the movement’s strategy and structure were determined by measures taken by the imperial government. A similar story could be told of many of the other nationalist movements – including the Irish and Scottish ones – within the British empire (e.g. Breuilly 1994: 170–83; MacKenzie 1998). Empire here gave form and meaning to the nationalist movements, facilitating communication, supplying ideologies of justification, providing models of organization. It is not surprising that the nation-states that emerged from empires were stamped, at least initially, with their image.

Equally telling is the growth of nationalism within the Habsburg Empire, where many of the nationalities came to see their existence as bound up with the future of the empire. Rejecting the call from the German National Assembly in Frankfurt in 1848 to join it as a Czech delegate, the Czech nationalist František Palacký gave as one of his reasons that ‘you irrevocably are, and will be, aiming to undermine Austria forever as an independent empire and to make its existence impossible – an empire whose preservation, integrity and consolidation is, and must be, a great and important matter not only for my own nation but for the whole of Europe, indeed for mankind and civilization itself’. For the Czechs as for other smaller nations of the Habsburg Empire, the empire was necessary as a bulwark against the always threatening power from the east – Russia – to which was added at the end of the century the growing power of a united Germany to the west. Hence, concluded Palacký, ‘if the Austrian state had not existed for ages, we would be obliged in the interests of Europe and even of mankind to endeavor to create it as fast as possible’ (Palacký 1961: 119–20; see also Cornwall 2006: 186). Empire here provided the supporting framework for the development of nationality; the two were not seen as contradictory. To the end of the Habsburg Empire the nationalities sought to preserve it – suitably reformed, generally in some form of federation, as proposed by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer – as the arena within which all nationalities would be free to express their own life and their cultural differences.⁸

Empire also enters in the stories of two of the classic instances of nineteenth-century nationalism, the Italian and German cases. Italian nationalism certainly had, in almost textbook fashion, its intellectuals, heroes and martyrs. It was perhaps the most loved and admired of all nineteenth-century nationalisms, with its ‘Young Italy’ movement the model and inspiration for a host of others of a like kind. Yet in terms of achieving its goal of Italian unification and independence it had got nowhere until one empire, that of Napoleon III, took on another, the Habsburg Empire, and after the French victory at Solferino (1859) began the process of

expelling the Habsburgs – the main obstacle to unification – from Italy. German nationalism similarly had a powerful intellectual tradition in the writings of Herder and Fichte, and strong middle-class support among professionals and intellectuals. But, after its failure – as in the case of Italy – in the 1848 revolutions, it too needed the ingenuity and ruthlessness of one empire – the Prussian Hohenzollern Empire – and its defeat of other empires – the Austrian and the French – to achieve a partial success in 1871 (Prussia, it was said, was a state that acquired a nation in 1871). This has been indeed a marked and consistent feature of the success of almost all nationalisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: they have needed the competition and conflict between empires to find the space and opportunity to express themselves and to achieve at least some measure of success in the establishment of nation-states. The First and Second World Wars were such ‘wars of empires’ (Burbank and Cooper 2010: 369–442), making possible the creation of a host of new nation-states in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

These are just brief indications of the relations between nations and empires, nationalism and imperialism. Much remains to be done. Empires and nations have for too long been studied as if they belonged to separate categories, historically and analytically: the former archaic and pre-modern, the latter the norm of the modern world. They have been counterposed to each other as stark antitheses. We have to see that the picture is much more complicated than that, and that nations and empires have a much closer relationship than we are inclined to think.

Nationalism in the nineteenth century has commonly been presented from the point of view of nationalists themselves. It is their thought and action, often generous and heroic, their struggle and triumph over difficult obstacles, that have been seen as the main narrative. Whether nationalism is seen in ‘primordial’ or ‘modernist’ terms (Smith 1998), whether, that is, nations are regarded as natural or long-existing entities that were summoned into new life in the nineteenth century, or freshly minted creations, the work of scholars and intellectuals in the main, the accounts are still predominantly framed in the terms of the nationalists themselves. Nationalism suffers greater or lesser defeats, is held back or advances, but its triumphs and failures are seen largely from the perspective of the nationalist movements. This view is changing but remains the staple of most accounts.⁹

In the worldwide conflict of 1914–18, ethnic, civic and imperial nationalism collided in a cataclysmic way. The result eventually was the downfall of many empires, and the rise of a more virulent ethnic nationalism in many of the new nation-states formed out of their ruins. Such an effect, and its appalling consequences in the interwar period and the Second World War, have led many scholars to read the nationalist narrative backwards, seeing in the nineteenth century the same forms of nationalism that were so destructive in the twentieth. Whatever our view of nationalism as a principle, we have to see that its history is far more varied than this narrative allows. From the all-embracing internationalist nationalism of Mazzini and Mill, to the exclusive ethnic nationalism of Germans, Hungarians, Czechs and others in the early twentieth century, nationalism covers a wide spectrum of meanings and positions.

Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, we have to see that nationalism cannot be studied on its own, as an internal and integral phenomenon. Nationalism evolved in tandem with many other ideas and forces, and it was influenced in its

development by those surrounding elements. Among these were empires, the major players on the global stage in the nineteenth century. There can be no convincing account of nineteenth-century nationalism that ignores the shaping effects of empire.

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NOTES

- 1 This is a contentious area. For a discussion of ‘nations before nationalism’, see Armstrong (1982), Smith (1986), Ichijo and Uzelac (2005), Scales and Zimmer (2005). For the view that nationalism was a nineteenth-century invention, and did not exist before, see Kedourie (1993), Gellner (2006), Hobsbawm (1992).
- 2 The study of Britishness long lagged behind that of Englishness, Scottishness, etc., but it is beginning to catch up. Colley (1992a) led the way; see also Colley (1992b, 2009). For good recent discussions, see Robbins (1993), *New Community* (1995), McCrone (1997). Langlands (1999), *The Political Quarterly* (2000), Bryant (2006), Gamble and Wright (2009), *Parliamentary Affairs* (2010). Additional references are in Kumar (2010b).
- 3 For a more detailed discussion of the making of a British identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Kumar (2003: 121–74). See also Robbins (1995, 1998).
- 4 Even ‘Anglo-Saxonism’, which might seem to carry a heavy English freight, was a unifying force in Britain at least, if not the United Kingdom as a whole. See Kidd (2003; 2008: 151–69).
- 5 For some good studies showing the interconnections between the various parts of the empire and the home population in the United Kingdom, see Hall (2002), Colley (2004), Buettner (2004), Hall and Rose (2006). All emphasize the making of a shared imperial culture, a sense of sharing a common ‘British world’ – though not always in a celebratory mode.
- 6 ‘Greater Britain’ of course excluded India and other parts of the empire where the European population was thinly on the ground – a problem solved by Seeley and others by the expectation that India would in the course of time achieve independence. Britishness in this sense always contained a racial component, although rarely exclusively.
- 7 Undoubtedly it was the movement for Irish home rule in the late nineteenth century that stimulated thinking about national identities in Britain – perhaps for the first time ever. See Kendle (1989).
- 8 It is hence misleading to claim, as Oscar Jászi did in a celebrated work, that nationalism was ‘the chief factor in the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire’ (Jászi 1961: 250). For a more sceptical view, see Sked (2001). Cornwall (2006: 191) argues that it was only in the First World War that Habsburg ‘flexibility’ on the nationalities question broke down, giving rise to more rigid nationalisms – a situation exploited by the Allies, who stoked nationalist feeling as a way to undermine the stability of the empire (cf. Germany’s encouragement to the Bolsheviks in Russia).
- 9 It is still largely present, for instance, in the otherwise excellent collection by Baycroft and Hewitson (2006). But a wider perspective can be found in several of the essays in Teich and Porter (1993), such as those by Adrian Littleton on Italy and Walter Schmidt and Heinrich Winkler on Germany.

CHAPTER NINE

GEOPOLITICS AND THE VICTORIAN GEOPOLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS



Lauren M. E. Goodlad

More than a decade into the twenty-first century, globalization remains at the fore of the world's cultural imaginary. While the term evokes different experiences for differently situated communities, it nonetheless describes the modern structures that bind people, however unevenly, across boundaries of nationality, race, ethnicity, region, and class. For scholars of the Victorian era, the global zeitgeist has spurred interest in transnational approaches as well as concerns over methodological provincialism. Does the category 'Victorian' imply that scholars of 'the *Victorian* world' approach that topic in the grips of nation-centric or even anglocentric mindsets? Does the focus on the nineteenth century obscure the *longue durée* of capitalism's global advance along with the imperial and neo-imperial practices that have accompanied it? Many scholars mindful of such questions have turned to *cosmopolitanism*, defined in a recent special issue as 'an ethos that attempts to encompass all humanity while remaining attentive to the pitfalls of humanism' (Agathocleous and Rudy 2010: 390). Yet, insofar as cosmopolitanism's focal points privilege ethos at the expense of materiality, the concept risks ignoring the forms of power that, for centuries, have entrenched inequality across the globe.

In this chapter I discuss the potential of *geopolitics* to operate as a supplementary category for transnational Victorianist study. The critical conception I have in mind takes its cue from critiques of nineteenth-century eurocentricism, nation-centricism, and hierarchism. Spurred by 'the new imperial history', today's scholarship has moved beyond the dyad of metropole and colony, redescribing the British Empire as a 'variety of different though interpenetrating empires the boundaries of which were sometimes hard to discern' (Bell forthcoming: 'Empire'). Watersheds such as the 1876 Royal Titles Act marked the onset of formal empire; but the history of British imperialism is much older and more multifarious. Scholars now differentiate between, for example, the multi-state formation of the British Isles; colonies of white settlement in North America and Australia; Atlantic slavery and the rise of the sugar plantation complex; and territorial rule in India and, later, Africa. As such multiplicity suggests, 'Victorian geopolitics' is a category with the potential to match particular locations and contexts to equally specific practices and aims, even while remaining mindful of the systemic features of globalizing capital.

Then too, imperialism in the broad sense is not always a question of direct political sovereignty. Contemporary commentators such as Herman Merivale, a political economist and colonial official, regarded commercial dominion as yet another dimension of British imperialism. Merivale's 1870 article described the world 'between India and Japan', as 'almost' part of Britain's 'empire, in all but name' – describing a land mass including China as beholden to Britain's 'immense political influence' either by 'actual possession', 'quasi-territorial dominion', 'treaties', or simply 'great superiority in general commerce' (Merivale 1870: 174). His essay evokes a heterogeneous imperial network combining military, political, diplomatic, and economic power – not a monolithic structure in which London-based bureaucrats administered a far-flung but uniform periphery.

To be sure, *geopolitics* might seem to offer an unlikely complement for a revisionist historiography, since the term is often associated with the naked pursuit of national interest as well as the foreign policy outlook of the 'realist' school of international relations (a vision of atomized nation-states vying in an anarchic field).¹ Although this usage of 'geopolitics' was popularized in the 1980s by foreign policy realists like Henry Kissinger, the strategic deployment of power for which it is a euphemism was often manifest in Victorian discourse. As Muriel Chamberlain writes, the Victorian public tended to 'believe that Britain held a unique position in the world' and 'liked to believe both in British benevolence and British power' (Chamberlain 1989: 6, 7). If this characterization tends to cast British foreign policy as idealist rather than realist, Victorian discourse frequently combined the two, articulating economic and imperial interests in rhetorics that stressed the liberating diffusion of British commercial, democratic, and humanitarian ideals.

In his well-known 1842 speech on the Corn Laws, for example, Lord Palmerston eulogized trade as 'the interchange of mutual benefits engendering mutual kind feelings', a progressive practice that would lead 'civilization with one hand and peace with another' (excerpted in Bourne 1970: 255). Yet, as foreign secretary or prime minister for most of the period between 1830 and 1865, Palmerston's policies included Opium Wars with China as well as campaigns like the Afghan and Crimean Wars to check Russian access to South Asia. Writing privately to the Governor General of India in 1841, Palmerston insisted that it 'is the business of the Government to open and to secure the roads for the merchant'. Concerned that European manufacturers were 'fast excluding' British products from continental markets, Palmerston declared that government 'must unremittingly endeavour to find in other parts of the world new vents for the produce of our industry' (quoted in Davison 1992: 28). Palmerston thus instanced *realpolitik* more than 50 years before that word entered the English language (*OED*).

Still, it is worth remembering that 'geopolitics' was invented by geographers at the turn of the twentieth century to describe 'the influence of spatial environment on political imperatives', not the strategic deployment of power (Howard 1994).² While the pioneers of this new social science tended toward pseudo-scientific positivism, today's geographers use 'geopolitics' critically, as when Gearóid Ó Tuathail questions 'the logocentric infrastructures' that endow 'geopolitics' with the status of a 'natural' and 'knowable' reality (Tuathail 1996: 68); when feminist geographers resituate such critical analyses from embodied perspectives (Hyndman 2004); or when scholars explore the spatial underpinnings of new theories of

sovereignty (Minca 2007). In yet another critical usage of ‘geopolitics’, Marxist scholars like Immanuel Wallerstein and Fredric Jameson use the term to designate the political framework for capitalism’s evolving world system.

The pseudo-scientific origins of ‘geopolitics’ in the works of geographic pioneers such as Halford J. Mackinder have been explored by scholars in many disciplines. Mackinder was at the forefront of ‘an evolutionary-inspired marriage of society and environment’ (Livingstone 1993: 193), the ultimate purpose of which was the ‘maintenance and progress of our Empire’ (Mackinder 1911, quoted in Livingstone 1993: 194). Thus, in his oft-cited 1904 lecture, ‘The Geographical Pivot of History’, Mackinder proclaimed that ‘for the first time’ ever, geographers

can perceive something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world, and may seek a formula which shall express certain aspects . . . of geographical causation in universal history. . . . I propose . . . [to describe] those physical features of the world which I believe to have been most coercive of human action, and presenting some of the chief phases of history as organically connected with them . . . My aim will [be] . . . to exhibit human history as part of the life of the world organism.

(Mackinder 1904: 4)

While an early nineteenth-century precursor for this blend of evolutionary theory, social-scientific positivism, and methodological organicism can be found in Auguste Comte’s groundbreaking sociology, it is worth comparing the *realpolitik* that one finds in Victorian foreign policy with the ambitious imperial science Mackinder sketches above. This in fact is a key aim of Christopher GoGwilt’s *The Fiction of Geopolitics* (2000), which argues that Mackinder’s positivistic geopolitics originated in a paradigm shift, from a ‘singular idea of human culture’ in the nineteenth century, ‘to a relativist idea of separate cultures’ (GoGwilt 2000: 2–3). For GoGwilt, that is, the eventual loss of the Victorian era’s ‘singular’ cultural metanarrative summons the fiction of geopolitics – constituting it as ‘the riddling afterimage of all those [nineteenth-century] attempts to systematize and explain human history’ (GoGwilt 2000: 40). This would be a compelling thesis were the evidence sufficient to confirm the dominance of a unitary Victorian theory of culture. In actuality, while some early social sciences evinced a strenuous universalism (see Stocking 1991), they were hardly representative of the broad panoply of Victorian writing.³ A Victorianist theory of geopolitics must therefore recognize that nineteenth-century assumptions about culture were neither consistently universalistic, nor materially pre-geopolitical.

Fredric Jameson (1995) has used the term *geopolitical unconscious* to describe how aesthetic forms like film allegorize complex geopolitical processes that are not yet available to conscious articulation. I want to adopt Jameson’s term to denote how the largely non-aesthetic writings of Harriet Martineau and J. S. Mill became freighted with geopolitical motives of which they were at best partially aware. Geopolitics in this sense looks beyond the conscious political strategies of statesmen like Palmerston. Rather, geopolitical analysis and the geopolitical unconscious point toward deep-seated fractures in the ideas upholding imperial expansion over the course of the nineteenth century.

As Alan Lester writes in this volume, the Victorian period opened with an optimistic humanitarian agenda for British imperialism: ‘one founded on a divinely sanctioned civilising mission, opposed to naked greed and brutality of emigrant Britons, and promoting a conception of equal rights regardless of “race”’. Over time, as settler demands trumped such efforts to ensure liberal treatment of indigenous people (and enslaved Africans), ‘a consolidated, trans-imperial notion of racial difference’ came to prevail. From a geopolitical perspective, one immediately observes an analogous split between the popular belief in England as the vanguard of world peace and prosperity, and the imperial interests that leaders like Palmerston aggressively promoted.

But geopolitical analysis also points to more subtle tensions. Britain’s self-conception as a *liberal* power – in deliberate contrast to authoritarian empires on the Continent – meant that particular kinds of imperial expansion required particular kinds of justification. Whereas white settlement colonies in North America and Australia could easily gratify the ideal of an empire of trade and settlement that was ‘Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free’ (Armitage 2000: 8), Britain’s rule over the densely populated Indian subcontinent required a different vision of the nation’s world-historical role. Thus, while Lester correctly points to the civilizing mission as the most common justification for rule over Indians, it is also true that prior to the Sepoy ‘mutiny’ of 1857–58, many Victorians hardly thought about India at all. The historian J. R. Seeley immortalized this disavowal as the ‘absence of mind’ that had seemed to characterize England’s territorial expansion across ‘half the world’ (1883: 8). The gradual shift toward racial ideologies was, thus, the work in part of a simmering geopolitical unconscious.

In the early nineteenth century, coincident with humanitarian optimism, political economists and abolitionists forecast the rapid spread of Anglo-Saxon economic and cultural norms through commerce, emigration, and emancipation. In light of what John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson have called the ‘Imperialism of Free Trade’, even India could be portrayed as the short-term ‘dependency’ of a commercial power, as when Thomas Babington Macaulay, addressing Parliament in 1833, said: ‘That would, indeed, be a doting wisdom, which, in order that India might remain a dependency . . . would keep a hundred millions of men from being our customers in order that they might continue to be our slaves’ (Macaulay 1833: 717). Yet, abolition of slavery of the 1830s failed to deliver the docile and efficient wage labor that activists had promised. By 1854, racial ideologies were on the rise, abolition was declared a failure by many, and the removal of tariffs on slave-grown sugar signaled a ‘loss of commitment’ to West Indian progress (Porter 1999b: 211). In this reactionary climate (soon to be exacerbated by the Indian rebellion), British rule in South Asia was recast as a long-term tutelage with the mission to civilize invoked to justify an entrenched and geopolitically prestigious empire. While this elongated imperial temporality is important to note, so too is the scant attention most Britons had paid to India in the pre-rebellion decades.

In the remainder of this chapter I will demonstrate how such disavowed geopolitical undercurrents produced deep-seated tensions and inconsistency in the political thought of two of Britain’s most celebrated liberal intellectuals, Harriet Martineau and J. S. Mill, thus paving the way for the eventual ascendancy of a

‘new’ imperialism founded on the explicitly racial and romanticized Tory ideas of Benjamin Disraeli.

HARRIET MARTINEAU’S CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

Few Victorian political writers were more vocal than Martineau, the celebrated popularizer of political economy, pioneering sociologist, abolitionist, travel writer, journalist, and domestic authority. Yet, so far from a consistent creed, Martineau’s multi-faceted writings illustrate the geopolitical embedding specific to different dimensions of a multifold imperialism. As a staunch abolitionist, Martineau articulated the kind of universalistic liberalism that Macaulay expressed in 1833, when he forecast the speedy transformation of Indians into the anglicized customers of a great commercial power. Yet, when Martineau first took up what eventually became known as the Eastern Question, she predicted a terrible clash between ‘Asia and Europe’ (Martineau and Weiner 1877: 2: 451) – the very reverse of the universalizing assimilation she anticipated for emancipated African slaves. In fact, Martineau’s Russophobia anticipated Mackinder’s singling out Russia as a considerable part of ‘the pivot region of the world’s politics’ (Mackinder 1904: 434).

At a time when political progressives like Martineau were investing in causes like Italian nationhood, tsarist Russia could be portrayed as a retrograde obstacle to Europe’s modernity. Such casting of Russia as an anomalous Asian power ignored Britain’s longstanding interest in curbing Russia’s influence over strategic gateways to India. These geopolitical motives seemed illegible to Martineau whose autobiography, drafted in the midst of the Crimean War, closes with an 1849 letter that forecasts ‘the greatest conflict that the human race has yet witnessed’, a war between East and West that ‘no man now living will see the end of’ (Martineau and Weiner 1877: 2:451).⁴ Whereas Martineau portrays Britain as a vanguard Western nation in an ongoing project of freedom which was currently militating against slavery in the United States, she makes Russia the site of a nefarious ‘Eastern barbarism’: an empire determined to ‘extend despotism’ and reduce its own people ‘to a brute machine’ (Martineau and Weiner 18772: 451–52).

In the years leading up to the Crimean conflict, Martineau remained true to this vision of a war on despotism. Her hawkish calls for battle with Russia were notable in breaking with the pacifist free trade ideology she elsewhere endorsed. At a time when John Bright and Richard Cobden remained firm in opposing the war, Martineau used her leaders in *The Daily News* to lambast the Aberdeen administration for its reluctance to uphold the ‘cause of Liberty’ (Martineau 1853: 153) – seemingly unaware that the statesmen responsible for eventually declaring war were motivated less by the cause of Turkish freedom than defence of Britain’s empire.

By contrast, Cobden argued that the Eastern Question made war a losing affair for all liberal-minded Britons. The Crimean War was not a moral crusade like anti-slavery or Italian liberation, but a cause that gave Britain ‘a despot for an enemy [Russia], a despot for an ally [France under Napoleon III], and a despot for a client [Ottoman Turkey]’ (quoted in Cain 1979: 244). War, Cobden insisted, fuelled

aristocratic interests in empire, military aggression, and the outdated notion of the balance of power. Although his anti-war position was as Orientalist as Martineau's arguments for defending Turkey, Cobden's account of the war's geopolitical motives was largely accurate as well as consistent with free trade principles. Yet, subsequent events demonstrated the popularity of Martineau's geopolitically naive pro-war stance. Although the Crimean War infamously exposed Britain's incompetent military leadership, Cobden and Bright's pacifism lost them their parliamentary seats in 1857. Whereas Cobden lost 'his faith in the middle classes as the carriers of social progress' (Cain 1979: 244), Martineau remained unrepentant. She not only retained the Russophobic conclusion to her autobiography, but also revisited the topic of the Crimean War in 1866. The expanded edition of her *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* derided the 'so-called Peace party', describing them as meddlesome Quakers who had emboldened Russia by misrepresenting British opinion (Martineau 1865–6, 4: 590). A preeminently 'good cause' in Martineau's view, there 'could scarcely have been a better or more natural close to the forty years' peace' than the Crimean War (Martineau 1865–6, 4: 597).

Martineau's Russophobia illustrates the kind of geopolitical unconscious that could saturate the principled rhetoric of Britain's 'public moralists'.⁵ So far from deliberately manipulating popular prejudice for the sake of *realpolitik*, Martineau never diverged from her perception of an epic contest 'between despotism and self-government' that would determine 'whether the Asiatic principle and method of social life are to dominate or succumb' (Martineau and Weiner 1877, 2:451–52). Nor was her investment in the Eastern Question powered by strong allegiance to the imperial cause. To the contrary, Martineau regarded herself as a prophet of freedom and equality, never endorsing an imperial agenda as such. Her autobiography predicts that abolition of slavery will anticipate gradual transition to collective ownership of land: 'The old practice of Man holding Man as property is nearly exploded among civilized nations; and the analogous barbarism of Man holding the surface of the globe as property cannot long survive' (Martineau and Weiner 1877, 2: 456). Ironically, Martineau never considered how such ideals were compromised by wars fought to protect British territorial interests.

In fact, like many mid-Victorian liberals, Martineau hardly acknowledged the existence of a territorial empire. Only with the outbreak of rebellion in 1857 did she begin to account for an imperial presence that she, like much of the British public, had tended to disavow. Britain's 'footing in India', she wrote in 1858, was unlike settlements in North America, since it 'began and extended without the national cognizance' (Martineau 1858a: 178). 'India is no colony of ours', she declared, and the question of whether India 'shall be ruled by the British Government' was a 'tremendous problem' that had yet to be addressed (Martineau 1858a: 178). Martineau's post-rebellion writings were thus implicated in the awkward endeavor of discussing an imperial 'relationship while denying that one existed' (Logan 2004: 170).

Like her Russophobic discourse on the Eastern Question, Martineau's writings on the Indian 'mutiny' were neither universalistic in the mode of her abolitionist writings, nor tolerant in the manner of her travel accounts. In *British Rule in India* (1857), she claimed that British efforts to maintain anti-racist policies in India had

been thwarted by ‘the bottomless chasm that yawns between the interior nature of the Asiatic and the European races’ (Martineau 1857: 8, 142). For the most part, however, Martineau affirmed the anglicization agenda, insisting that the apparent barbarity of South Asians was a mutable condition that would improve under continued British influence. ‘Slaves’, she wrote, in defence of Indians’ supposed proclivity for falsehood, ‘are liars all the world over’ (Martineau 1858b: 260).⁶ Martineau thus cast Indians’ ‘slavery’ not as an agonistic struggle like that between slaves and masters in the United States, but as the effect of an Asian despotism from which British rule is cast as liberating.

As apologies for imperialism, Martineau’s post-1857 writings on India were anxious and contradictory. If at times she demanded sympathetic understanding of the colonized, at other points, her reluctance to mingle East with West recalled the apocalyptic tenor of her Crimean rhetoric: ‘Never was there a more difficult case – never a more portentous conjunction in human history, than this arbitrary coexistence of the European and Asiatic genius on the same soil’ (Martineau 1858a: 192). British rule was thus cast as necessary but precarious. Indians were improved and improvable but also ‘incomprehensible’ on cultural, if not necessarily racial grounds (Martineau 1858a: 182). Martineau, on the one hand, asserted the mutual benefits of what she continued to present as a relation of trade, and on the other, identified the British as an occupying power ready to hunker down for ‘a guerilla war of many years’ (Martineau 1858b: 262). Ironically, her rhetoric of clashing civilizations – while ostensibly innocent of geopolitical motive – perfectly anticipates Mackinder’s pseudo-scientific account of the inevitable superiority of Western civilization. For Mackinder, that is, if Central Asia is the geographic pivot of history, it is because ‘European civilization’ has been the ‘outcome of the secular struggle against Asiatic invasion’ (Mackinder 1904: 423).

JOHN STUART MILL’S ACCIDENTAL IMPERIALISM AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE NATION-STATE

If Martineau personifies the ‘absent-minded’ imperialist of Seeley’s lament, Mill, whose long career with the East India Company began with an apprenticeship under his father at the age of 17, was an accidental imperialist. As Mill himself puts it in a telling use of passive voice: ‘In May 1823, my professional occupation and status for the next thirty-five years of my life, were decided by my father’s obtaining for me an appointment from the East India Company’ (Mill 1873: 50–51). Long guided by Mill’s reticence on the topic, scholars have only recently begun to explore the interchange between Mill’s writings and professional work (Zastoupil 1994; Moir, Peers, and Zastoupil 1999).

In *Liberalism and Empire* (1999), Uday Singh Mehta looks at pro-imperial liberals including Mill to argue that liberal thought is intrinsically disposed to universalistic abstraction and, thus, driven to dominate and erase difference. Several scholars since have shown that Mehta’s thesis underestimates the heterogeneity of liberal discourse.⁷ In fact, the younger Mill’s distinctive political ideas matured after he turned away from the abstract theories of James Mill and Jeremy Bentham,

and toward concrete ‘experiments of living’ (Mill 1859a: 102). But the result was neither an immediate nor a necessary rejection of imperialism. In the 1840s, as Mill became disillusioned with the Benthamite agenda, he looked to historical and sociological analysis to create a new foundation for social progress. If this comparativism opened the door to an invigorating affirmation of cultural particularity, it also facilitated a tendency to envision world history through a vanguard of Western nation-states. Mill’s readiness to make the nation a precondition for sovereignty ushered in what William Connolly has called ‘a liberalism divided against itself’ (Connolly 1999: 82).⁸ Mill’s largely unconscious involvement in imperial geopolitics, I suggest, explains how an otherwise innovative and radical political thought became ‘divided against itself’ in the years just before and after the Indian rebellion of 1857–58.

In the *Autobiography*, Mill wrote that ‘A Few Words on Non-Intervention’, ‘expressed ideas . . . generated by my Indian experience . . . respecting the true principles of international morality, and the legitimate modifications made in it by difference of times and circumstances’ (Mill 1873: 155). As the reference to differing ‘times and circumstances’ suggests, Mill’s 1859 article reproduces a developmental worldview, rendering progress in the temporal idiom that Johannes Fabian has called the denial of coevalness (as in the Victorian device of likening colonized subjects to children). Thus, while Mill lays down the principle that ‘it is as little justifiable to force our ideas on other people, as to compel them to submit to our will in any other respect’, he soon makes clear that imperial tutelage is the exception to the rule. ‘Barbarian’ peoples ‘have no rights as a *nation*, except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest period, fit them for becoming one’ (Mill 1859b: 118–19).

Nonetheless, Mill’s digression into the history of Britain’s rule over ‘the native states of India’ (Mill 1859b: 119) – that is, those parts of the empire governed indirectly through treaties with local sovereigns – provides a complicated picture of his attitudes toward imperialism, a year after the 1857 rebellion resulted in the end of the East India Company’s administrative functions along with Mill’s retirement from Indian affairs. Although Mill does not say so in the article, correspondence with the ‘native states’ was his chief occupation as an Indian official. The expression of a vexing geopolitical unconscious, Mill’s quasi-autobiographical digression on India must be read against the grain of his pro-imperial and nation-centric ethics.

The bulk of Mill’s essay urges high-minded internationalism, including intervention in Europe’s liberationist struggles ‘against a foreign yoke’ (Mill 1859b: 123). Yet when his thoughts turn to imperial relations, the story Mill tells is of *realpolitik* gone awry. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, he explains, Britain was compelled to subjugate a large number of Indian states in order to secure its ‘possessions’ on the subcontinent (Mill 1859b: 119). Instead of annexing these ‘native states’ to the territory under direct British rule, the East India Company made contractual arrangements with local sovereigns through whom it ruled indirectly. Notably, Mill neither questions the notion of British ‘possessions’, nor compares Britain’s presence in South Asia to the ‘foreign yokes’ of Europe. Nonetheless, in a surprising critique of indirect empire, Mill’s essay condemns the ‘deplorable’ effects of Britain’s long history of propping up despotic local regimes.

In the case of Awadh ('Oude'), a native kingdom from 1801 to 1856, the British authorities, anxious to avoid the controversial recourse of annexing an important Muslim state, had, Mill writes, been 'morally accountable' for sustaining an 'appalling' 'mixture of tyranny and anarchy' (Mill 1859b: 120).

Aware that many mid-Victorian readers regarded the 1856 annexation of Awadh as a policy blunder that provoked rebellion the following year, Mill seeks to set the record straight. '[F]ar from being the political crime it is so often ignorantly called', the annexation of Awadh was 'a criminally tardy discharge of an imperative duty' (Mill 1859b: 120). What the article does not say is that, as an official specializing in relations with the 'native states', Mill had repeatedly advised *against* the annexation of Awadh, making Mill himself a key perpetrator of 'criminal tardiness'. The article thus interrupts Mill's near silence on his imperial career, revisiting his transition from James Mill's uncompromising anglicization agenda to the culturally moderate Tory policy of 'engraftment'.

In the 1830s, coincident with Mill's growing distrust of Enlightenment abstraction, his official writings drifted from his father's anglicist program, which regarded India as 'a tabula rasa which could be moulded according to utilitarian dictates' (Majeed 1990: 55), and toward a position that acknowledged the importance of local opinion and traditions.⁹ If Westernization could still benefit Indians under *direct* British rule, in regard to the 'native states', Mill came to favor engraftment through the education of Indian rulers as a practical and ethical means to executing Britain's contractual relation with these quasi-sovereign domains.

Mill's decades-long effort to reconcile anglicization and engraftment was symptomatic of the moral quandaries of a liberal imperialism so-called. According to James Mill, indirect rule was 'an unfortunate' practice that protected Indian sovereigns from political challenge without ensuring the justice or utility of their governance (quoted in Moore 1999: 91). The ongoing concern over misgovernment in Awadh, which might have prompted the younger Mill to endorse his father's position, saw him arguing instead that annexation was 'a step to be justified only by extreme necessity', prior to which 'every intermediate course which held out any hope of being effectual' ought to be tried (quoted in Moore 1991: 94). It was not until 1855, after almost 30 years of urging caution, that Mill began to question whether the long delay in 'fulfilling [the] duty' to annex Awadh had been 'excusable' (quoted in Moore 1986: 159).

To be sure, Mill's caution might be construed as a cool *realpolitik* that calculated the value of dependent sovereigns as greater than the supposed 'good of the governed'. Certainly during the rebellion, India's royals proved to be crucial British allies while the annexed Awadh became a rebel stronghold. But Mill's correspondence does not support this interpretation. Rather, by the 1850s, Awadh's continuing problems were deeply troubling Mill in seeming to vindicate his father's belief that indirect rule was an imperial intervention worse than none at all.

Ironically, this increasing unease in the years just prior to the outbreak of rebellion in 1857 rendered Mill out of sync with the zeitgeist that emerged in the aftermath. At a time when most Britons came to see annexation as a reckless policy, Mill continued to regret the '*fausse délicatesse*' that had allowed 50 years of 'atrocious' rule in Awadh (Mill 1859a: 561). Likewise, while indirect rule now

seemed to offer a model for the New Imperialism to come, Mill saw little evidence of its fulfilling the goals of a defensible civilizing mission. Declining a position in the new post-rebellion administration, Mill predicted ‘nothing but useless vexation and waste of effort’ (Mill 1873: 144).

Mill’s growing alienation from imperial affairs explains his near silence during the rebellion. His main professional task during the crisis was to defend the Company in the face of Parliament’s determination to institute Crown rule. His most trenchant contemporaneous critique of British activities that he later described as ‘atrocities’ (Mill 1859b: 1205) occurred in a footnote in *On Liberty*. As against the illusion of British tolerance, ‘the Sepoy insurrection’ revealed ‘the worst parts of our national character’, proving that the ‘strong permanent leaven of intolerance . . . which at all times abides in’ the British middle classes ‘needs but little to provoke’ outright persecution (Mill 1859a: 75; note).

Mill’s apparent conflict – critical of Britain’s response to the rebellion, yet equally sure that annexation of Awadh had been ‘criminally tardy’ – explains why ‘A Few Words on Non-Intervention’ is neither a liberal story about needful imperial tutelage, nor a Romantic tale of Anglo-Indian engraftment, but, rather, a somber account of a demoralizing *realpolitik* of which Mill never seems wholly conscious. On the one hand, Mill strives to assimilate India to his nation-centric vision, intimating that the ‘true standard’ by which imperialism should be judged is its success in aiding ‘barbarians’ to attain nationhood. On the other, he identifies a key problem in the contiguity of ‘barbarous neighbours’ – those ‘native States’ who, if left alone, would threaten the ‘security’ of any civilizing project (Mill 1859b: 119–20). A government engaged in such enterprise must either ‘conquer’ these neighbours or ‘assert so much authority over them . . . that they gradually sink into a state of dependence upon itself’, leaving the colonizer ‘morally responsible for all evil it allows them to’. This, Mill writes, ‘is the history of the relations of the British Government with the native States of India’ (Mill 1859b: 119).

Remarkably, Mill depicts Britain’s impact – and, by extension, the influence of his own career – as the very reverse of civilizing advance. If, as he wrote, in *Considerations on Representative Government*, imperial ‘leading-strings’ are ‘only admissible as a means of gradually training the people to walk alone’ (Mill 1861: 49), then Britain’s indirect rule, so far from ‘admissible’, had virtually crippled its intended beneficiaries, ‘sinking’ their governments into a ‘a state of nerveless imbecility’ (Mill 1859b: 120).

Yet, in the end, Mill evades the upshot of this analysis, erasing the so-called mutiny by way of erasing its show of Indian agency. As though metropolitan backlash against annexation were the significant protest, rather than the Indian uprising that triggered it, Mill ends by referring the problem of indirect rule to the mixed blessing of British liberality. Were Britons less ‘predisposed’ to ‘look unfavourably’ on acts conceived as benefiting their national interest, Awadh’s annexation would be recognized as a just intervention. This bizarrely unsatisfactory conclusion not only ignores Indian sentiments and narrows the scale of the rebellion to a single region, it also obscures continuing problems in Awadh. Mill’s final answer is to change the subject, abruptly returning to the ‘totally different principles’ of intervention that prevail when the parties in question form ‘an equal community of nations, like Christian Europe’ (Mill 1859b: 120).

It is no wonder that in the years following Mill's retirement from the Company, his writings on South Asia were oblique and few. As Mill seems to have intuited, the rebellion exacerbated the aspects of British rule that had most troubled him in his efforts to reconcile imperialism with liberal principles. Parliamentary rule over India perverted democratic institutions by enjoining a representative body to govern distant people whom it neither represented nor even knew (Mill 1861: 349). Meanwhile that 'strong permanent leaven of intolerance' identified in *On Liberty* was hardening into vehement racism. Finally, as 'hide-bound Toryism' exerted increasing influence on Indian policy, British rule, direct as well as indirect, became ever more invested in English-style social hierarchy at the expense of the peasant ownership and middle-class professionalism, which Mill associated with enlightened British influence.¹⁰

In the years after Mill's official exit from Indian affairs, the empire began to assume its New Imperial guise. The emerging neo-feudal view, committed to the conservative hierarchies of English agriculture, was deeply at odds with Mill's vision of turning middle-class Indians into civil servants, and peasants into agricultural proprietors. Likewise, this new governmentality saw Indian royals not as agents of engraftment, cultivating hybrid forms of self-rule, but as permanent feudatories or – more cynically – strategic reactionaries to support British power against rising middle-class nationalist movements. Thus, when Mill looked back in his *Autobiography* and wrote that nothing had happened to make him regret his retirement from Indian affairs, he was telescoping decades of false consciousness: 'I had given enough of my life to India'. The long years of striving to synthesize two imperial philosophies in the effort to liberalize British rule had confronted a crushing reality in a rebellion that revealed how neither anglicization nor engraftment could apprehend – still less resolve or contain – the forces that Mill saw unleashed through the prism of Awadh. At some level, Mill seems to have recognized that both were, at bottom, a means of papering over imperial geopolitics with high-minded rationalizations.

But there is a significant afterlife to Mill's 'Indian experience', which extends beyond the tortured logic of his 1859 essay. Almost a decade after the rebellion, while he served in Parliament between 1865 and 1868, India surfaced in Mill's radical positions on the female franchise, Irish land reform, and the prosecution of Governor Edward Eyre, responsible for brutal repression in Jamaica. Indeed, Mill's outrage over the summary violence in Morant Bay seemed to transform his reflections on India. Though justice in Jamaica was a matter of 'transcendent importance' (Mill 1866: 160–61), Mill wrote, his eyes had already been 'opened to the moral condition of the English nation . . . by the atrocities perpetrated in the Indian Mutiny' (Mill 1859b: 1205–6). As such correspondence suggests, the events of 1857 had become the ethical epicentre of Mill's post-East India Company career. Although Mill had not quite become anti-imperialist, imperialism's constitutive violence crystallized for him in the 1860s, recurring in a constellation of locales that included Jamaica, India, and Ireland, as well as New Zealand and the American South. As it did so, Mill's retroactive invocations of the 'monstrous excesses' of 1857 testified against imperial geopolitics that his earlier writings had sought to legitimize.

CONCLUSION

In *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004), Bernard Porter takes the British attitude of disavowal that Martineau exemplifies to imply that imperialism was simply insignificant to Victorian culture until the end of the century. This reasoning overlooks the way that free trade discourse enabled territorial imperialism to operate as a geopolitical unconscious, masking – without erasing – the non-economic forms of domination that had transformed India into a vast empire of conquest (not to mention the quasi-imperial economic domination that the very non-absent-minded Merivale observed elsewhere on the globe). Neither does Porter's thesis help to explain the divided liberalism that Mill evinced in 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', nor the uncanny similarity between Martineau's expectation of a world-historical clash between East and West, and Mackinder's pseudo-scientific account half a century later.

Underlying the difference between Martineau's attitude toward enslaved Africans and 'Asiatic races' is the geopolitical distinction between two variations on the liberal narrative: one suitable for an imperialism of trade and white settlement, and the other for a very different project of territorial dominion in the densely populated global south.¹¹ This explains how the same woman who demanded liberation and citizenship for slaves insisted that South Asians were not yet fit for self-government (Martineau 1858a: 179). Whereas emancipated Africans could testify to the gradual inclusivity of Western civilization, the Orientalized peoples of India or Russia stood for incorrigible forms of human culture, which must be dealt with by exceptional means. Persuading themselves that imperialism could be ethical and progressive if its ultimate purpose were to turn 'slaves' into 'customers', mid-Victorian liberals such as Martineau increasingly embraced a profoundly illiberal imperial 'civilizing mission', even as they sought to war against rival powers within Europe. Her prescient clash with the 'clash of civilizations' is an object lesson for today.

As a long-time employee of the East India Company, Mill could hardly disavow the territorial empire that provided his professional income. If he never wholly acknowledged imperialism's geopolitical underside, the topic nonetheless visibly haunts his many efforts to set forth the standards of an ethical civilizing mission. Mill's turn away from Benthamite abstraction enabled him to theorize modern progress in terms of contingent historical features like the flourishing of diversity – aspects of his mature thought that made him a forceful critic of the mid-Victorian status quo as well as the era's foremost opponent of racial pseudo-science. Nonetheless, Mill's unexamined adherence to the developmental logic of the nation-state compromised his radical commitments to cultural multiplicity and positive liberty. Although Mill imagined *homo civicus* as a citizen of the world, he made prior attainment of 'nationality' the requirement for collective entrance into the domain of active history, thus conferring geopolitical privilege on the ideal of 'an equal community of nations, like Christian Europe'.

Unsurprising, by the late 1870s, coincident with Benjamin Disraeli's rise to power, the rhetoric of the civilizing mission was subsumed and, to a significant degree, superseded by the Tory notion of imperialism as a neo-feudal relation, consummated by the 1876 act that made Victoria India's empress. The concerted

empire-building of the New Imperialism resonated with the Tory flair for invented traditions, such as the Queen's new title and the elaborate Indian *darbar* staged by Lord Lytton in 1877. In his defence of the former, Disraeli explained that the purpose of 'amplifying' Queen Victoria's sovereignty was to 'touch and satisfy the imagination of nations' while ensuring that 'the people of India feel ... a sympathetic chord between us and them' (Disraeli 1876: 239). Such appeals to romance and feeling, as Bernard Cohn has argued, were alien to the modern liberal logics of contract and commerce, as well as to the humanitarian logic of civilizing tutelage. Although Disraeli himself is often described as a crafty tactician in the guise of an imperial romantic, the fact remains that his foreign policies, by and large, extended the aims of the Palmerston era.¹² What is clear is that the man so often vilified as a 'manipulative mountebank who had bargained away the nation's authentic English identity, and imperialized England almost beyond recognition' (Voskuil 2004: 142), subscribed to a philosophy of imperialism that was no longer dependent on a geopolitical unconscious.

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NOTES

- 1 This discussion of geopolitics is indebted to the ‘geopolitics’ section of the keywords introduction to ‘Victorian Internationalisms’, co-edited with Julia Wright.
- 2 Howard chides Kissinger for his ‘bewildering’ use of geopolitics as ‘a euphemism for power relationships’. The actual meaning of geopolitics, Howard notes, emphasizes geography: or ‘the influence of spatial environment on political imperatives’. Notably, most dictionaries do not include a usage of geopolitics that denotes strategic use of military, economic, and political power to promote national interests. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines geopolitics as the ‘influence of geography on the political character of states, their history, institutions, and esp. relations with other states; also, the study of this influence’.
- 3 For example, Carlyle and Ruskin denounced the universalisms of the French Revolution, while John Stuart Mill famously broke with Enlightenment precursors like Jeremy Bentham. In the realm of aesthetics one need only consider Walter Pater’s exhortation toward plurality in the 1868 ‘Conclusion’ to *The Renaissance* to appreciate the difficulty of accepting GoGwilt’s premise.
- 4 Martineau’s 1849 anticipation of ‘long and bloody warfare’ is remarkable for being written more than a year before friction between France and Russia led to the outbreak of war in 1854 (Martineau and Weiner 1877, 2: 454). On the other hand, Karl Marx seemed equally keen to isolate ‘Russian Aggrandizement’ as the preeminent engine of world history. For Marx, liberal defeat of Russia was crucial to completing the nationalist phase of European history, which would then pave the way for a working-class internationalism. ‘Russian Aggrandizement’ is the subtitle of Marx’s May 1853 article for the London *Times*, <http://marxengels.public-archive.net/en/MEo735en.html> (accessed November 10, 2011).
- 5 I borrow ‘public moralists’ from Collini (1991).
- 6 For sustained comparison between Martineau’s Asian, African, and European world-views, see Goodlad 2010.
- 7 See, for example, Thomas 2004: 16–22, Sartori 2006 as well as Goodlad 2006: especially 309–10.
- 8 Of course, this tendency toward hierarchical and exclusive nation-centrism was common. Matthew Arnold’s 1859 case for Italian liberation, for example, took the form of a litmus test for national greatness. He concluded that while an Italian would ‘descend and deteriorate by becoming anything’ else, a ‘Pole does not descend by becoming a Russian, or an Irishman by becoming an Englishman’ (17).
- 9 Imperial officials such as H. H. Wilson, and Mountstuart Elphinstone sought to ‘engraft’ European knowledge onto a venerable body of Oriental literature and custom. Zastoupil (1994) argues that the younger Mill’s exposure to such ideas at his desk in East India House amplified the Romantic turn away from the utilitarianism of Bentham and James Mill.
- 10 Mill used the phrase ‘hide-bound Toryism’ in an 1869 letter to Charles Dilke (Mill 1859c, 1560).
- 11 Of course, this split between ‘free’ settlement empires and territorial domination was itself subtended by the mythic assumption that indigenous people in North America were dying races (see Brantlinger 2003).
- 12 Feuchtwanger argues that Disraeli ‘took over much of’ Palmerston’s foreign policy stance, with his policy on the Eastern Question in particular ‘designed to confirm him as the inheritor of Palmerston’s mantle’ (Feuchtwanger 2002: 189).

PART II

ECONOMY AND
SOCIETY



CHAPTER TEN

ENTREPRENEURIALISM OR GENTLEMANLY CAPITALISM



Donna Loftus

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era is characterised by the growth of the middle class; but defining that class has provoked considerable debate. The first half of the nineteenth century is associated with the rise of the entrepreneurs in provincial centres and industrial cities of the north, whose growing economic and cultural power can be charted through the civic cultures of industrial towns and cities and the influence of pressure groups like the Anti-Corn Law League. There was a shift in hegemony in the late nineteenth century to gentlemanly capitalists, a group of financiers and landed elites in the south whose geographical location and rising economic power helped give them leverage with the central state. Histories of the middle class are complicated further by the rise of the professions, such as law and medicine, the articulation of established civil service bureaucracies, and the new roles created by modern forms of education and administration. Such complexity and diversity raises questions as to whether it is useful to talk about a middle class as a group with a collective identity and a shared agenda (Kidd and Nicholls 1998: xxvii; Goodlad 2000: 143).

The Victorian middle class was stratified, but it was also fluid and interconnected. The status of an individual could change over a lifetime, and the relatively open nature of elites allowed for movement between ranks. Fortunes could be made through marriage, business partnerships or the purchase of land. With the expansion of business and the growth of the state, new financial relationships were enabled: provincial banks remained important for local businesses and personal relationships remained an important means of acquiring credit, however the expansion of financial markets provided opportunities for a broad sector of the population to spread their personal investments and business further afield. Capital produced connections across sections of the middle class, but it also provided a mechanism for distinguishing groups. Though networks of credit and a culture of investment could hold empires together and help create national entities, different sectors of the economy developed separate roles and identities (Cottrell, Lange and Olsson 2007). As such, some historians have argued that the

industrial economy of the north and the financial capitalism of the south made up two separate social worlds (Cassis 1994: 2).

There is now a need for a better understanding of the way that capitalism integrated and distinguished sectors of the middle class. To do so requires an approach that explores the links between economic and cultural history. Recent scholarship has done much to break down the barriers between the two, showing that political economy inhabited the same intellectual world as science and literature and shared many assumptions about the workings of the social and economic system. These studies have shown how Victorian culture used existing tropes to represent value in new and different ways (Gallagher 2006; Poovey 2008). This chapter extends these approaches to consider how roles within the economy were represented in Victorian culture. In particular it considers the way an entrepreneurial ideal was formed in the early nineteenth century and attributed status through an emphasis on individual achievement and its social function. There is, as Casson has argued, no economic theory of entrepreneurialism, and studies rely on stereotypes (Casson 2003: 1, 5). Such stereotypes are useful tools of historical analysis that can be used to examine contemporary values. The industrial middle class shaped definitions of entrepreneurialism by interweaving their own personal transformation with that of their business and the town and city in which it was located. But these representations were soon outmoded. With the growth of financial capitalism entrepreneurialism was expanded to include innovation in finance, technical expertise, global knowledge and even imperialist adventure (Cain 2007: 256). The entrepreneurial ideal of northern industrialists was restated in life stories and local histories at the end of the nineteenth century, as it was being reshaped by new global understandings of the economy.

MIDDLE-CLASS FAILURE?

As Victoria's reign came to an end, there was an interest in recording the recent past (Taylor 2004: 1–3). Projects such as the *Victoria County History*, Pike's *New Century* and the *Dictionary of Edwardian Biography* recorded local histories as contributions to a collected national history. A number of small ventures in provincial towns and cities capitalised on the interest in the past by recording history through the life stories of local notable public men. Part history, part biography and part local guide, these provided prosopography and topography, describing change through people, social groups, institutions and buildings. These collected accounts were aimed at local readers, but they were also intended to counter metropolitan perspectives on the history of the nineteenth century. As the editor of *The Leeds Biographer* wrote, the collection of stories was intended to be a celebration of the 'thousands of men in the provinces' who were doing as great and as important work as those 'in the Houses of Parliament and other conspicuous theatres of action [and] whose lives and service are as worthy of public recognition, and permanent record, as are those who figure in the pages of the Illustrated Metropolitan Journals' (Beckett 1888).

The biographical accounts celebrated the industrial city through the achievements of its public men. The contributions that businessmen made to the locality through the generation of wealth and in years of public service were given particular

attention, and the skills and qualities that made men successful in business were assumed to be a source of their suitability for public office. As the *Bradford Portraits* noted of Thomas Priestly, mayor of Bradford: ‘he left school at an early age and commenced to acquire a practical knowledge of business in the “school of experience”’. Such experience, the *Portraits* inferred, qualified Priestley for his role as mayor: a job that involved ‘a great amount of arduous and anxious work and worry’. His impact could be measured in the town’s statistics: ‘its paved and macadamised roads measure 132 miles; its flagged causeways 173 miles’ (Beckett 1892). Such improvements in the appearance of the city depended on the energy, foresight and economy of businessmen, however, as the *Bradford Portraits* noted, the results were the achievements of a broader body of like-minded men. The public servants who were celebrated for building the city were largely drawn from the ranks of the local businessmen, but they were also part of a diverse group of middle-class men, which also included ministers and doctors, equally resourceful and hard working, who worked together to ensure the smooth running of the town and city.

These biographical collections sought to place the industrial town as central to the history of the period and turn its entrepreneurs into heroes. Inventors such as Watt and Arkwright were celebrated throughout the nineteenth century for the technical expertise and innovation that made the industrial revolution possible. According to MacLeod, these celebrations reached their peak in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, boosted in part by the Great Exhibition of 1851 (MacLeod 2007: 2). The life stories and local histories of the late nineteenth century attempted to celebrate the entrepreneur whose dedication to business converted inventions into national prosperity (MacLeod 2007: 327–38). This drive to represent industry and the city was part of broader efforts in the last decades of the nineteenth century to memorialise the transformation of Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds in buildings, such as the Manchester Town Hall (1877), and in historical accounts of civic reform.

However the timing of these reminiscences raises broader questions. The celebration of the achievements made by entrepreneurs took place at a time associated with the decline of the English industrial spirit (Wiener 2004: 165–70). As Cobden famously remarked in 1863:

We have the spirit of *feudalism* rife and rampant in the midst of the antagonistic development of the age of Watt, Arkwright, and Stephenson! Nay, *feudalism* is every day more and more in the ascendant in political and social life. So great is its power and prestige that it draws to it the support and homage of even those who are the natural leaders of the newer and better civilization. Manufacturers and merchants as a rule seem only to desire riches that they may be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of *feudalism*.

(Morley 2010 [1881]: 481–82)

The reform campaigns that lay at the centre of liberal culture helped constitute the provincial industrial middle class as a cultural force and as a political constituency. Yet, by the end of the century, little impact had been made on national English politics: parliament was dominated by the landed elite, and the values and attitudes

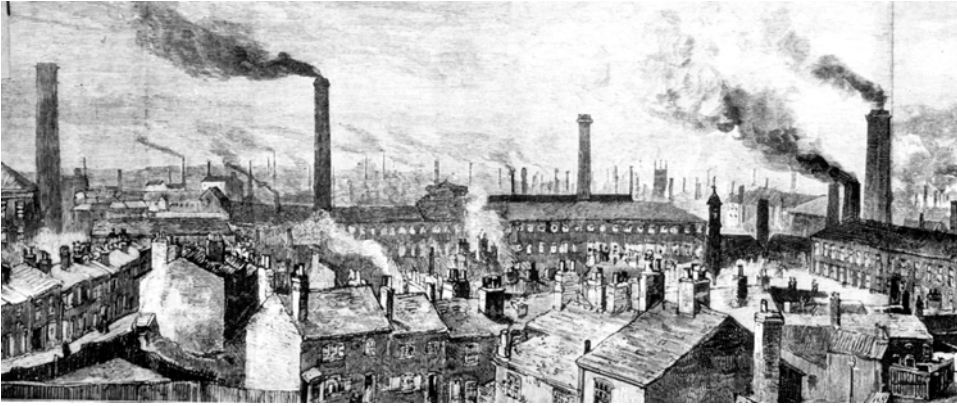


Figure 10.1 ‘The industrial aspect of Leeds from Richmond Hill’. *The Graphic* 1888.
By kind permission of Leeds Library and Information Services

promulgated by the British public school system still dominated political culture (Lubenow 1988: 169). Instead of representing the start of a middle-class revolution, the Reform Act of 1832 and the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 appeared by the end of the century as events that preceded the gradual absorption of the industrial classes into the ranks of the old elite. The supposed gentrification of the provincial middle class, seen in migration out of the industrial city, the purchase of a country house or the pursuit of public office, has been used as further evidence of a shift away from active investment in business, which reflected the low esteem in which industrial capital was held (Thompson 2001: [Chapter 7](#)). By the late nineteenth century industry had been superseded by gentlemanly capitalism, an alliance of finance, landed elites and administrators based in the South of England (Cain and Hopkins 2002).

The concept of gentrification has been challenged by studies that show the long and complicated relationship between industry and land. It was, as Gunn has argued, possible to ride with the hunt without being distracted from business (Gunn 1988: 29). Some of Manchester’s leading cotton industrialists such as McConnel and Kennedy had links with the gentry which they maintained throughout their business lives. Archetypal self-made men of the industrial revolution, such as Arkwright, successfully combined a gentry lifestyle with industry. An interest in art and literature was also a feature of the lives of the entrepreneurial middle class. Though the term ‘provincial’ might be used to refer to the limited intellectual perspectives of the industrial middle class, examination of their artistic interests suggests a vibrancy that cannot be reduced to the search for status or the display of taste (Seed 1988: 73).

The binary stereotypes of the historiography, of north and south, industry and gentlemanly capitalism, remain stubbornly resistant to more nuanced understandings of the place of entrepreneurialism in the culture of capitalism. The transformations in the economy associated with industrialisation posed fundamental questions about the role of capital in social and political life. Of particular concern

was the balance between stability and change, and the responsibilities that were associated with the generation of wealth. The extent to which the unregulated pursuit of self-interest could promote a broader social good was an issue that provoked considerable debate amongst political economists (Milonakis and Fine 2009: 17). Early nineteenth century political economy saw wealth as the primary motivation to industry, and the pursuit – as opposed to the inheritance – of wealth as an activity that developed skills, qualities and resources that were beneficial to the general good. For Mill the entrepreneur was entitled to profit in exchange for the risk, time and skill used in building and superintended a business (Mill 1909: Book 2, [Chapter 15](#), paragraph 4). Profits from industry were different from rents; they were the product of judgement and expertise. Such a view was used to register the social worth of the entrepreneur and, when popularised in Smilesian notions of self-making, imbued entrepreneurialism with moral authority. The motivation of men of modest means to generate wealth inspired hard work and perseverance that, in turn, promoted men of character to positions of social esteem in communities. In contrast, according to Smiles, men who inherit wealth ‘Having no special object to struggle for . . . remain morally and spiritually asleep’ (Smiles 1968 [1859]: 202).

Stereotypes of the northern industrial middle class emerged in part from contemporary debates on wealth, morality and authority and, as such, they show the need to explore culture and economy together. Entrepreneurialism is rarely the produce of the single-minded pursuit of wealth, and the form it takes varies according to local cultures, social formations and relationships (Jones and Wadhvani 2006). However, culture also influences the way such activities are represented. Though the term was used by Mill to refer to men who assumed the risk of a business in return for profit, it was taken up more broadly to express the transformative effect of capitalism. Smilesian notions of self-help reconfigured the entrepreneurialism of political economy into an ethos of progress in which character and community developed together (Anderson 2006: 7). It also enabled entrepreneurs to present themselves as the harbingers of change, whilst reaffirming traditional virtues such as duty and perseverance. Though the entrepreneurial spirit often expressed itself with reference to Protestant heritage, and, in particular, the rightful use of one’s inheritance, it also represented an awareness that Providence did not determine events. Entrepreneurs were actively shaping history.

Victorian entrepreneurialism was articulated as something generated from within yet open to all, to be found primarily in the provinces yet of wider cultural significance. It was specific to individuals and places but not reducible to a class or a locality. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial ethos was best described through the development of the provincial industrial city, which could be used to represent the social benefits of self-interest through the transformative effects of entrepreneurial capital. As such, mid-Victorian entrepreneurial culture was able to present certain practices of self – such as reflection of one’s life story and the journey from rags to riches or from naivety to enlightenment – and the association of like-minded men in civic forums as an integral part of the culture of capital. Understanding how entrepreneurialism became tied to the city in this way affords greater insight into notions of decline in the late nineteenth century: the mid-Victorian entrepreneurial ideal was represented in the link between business and the city, and the decline of the entrepreneurial spirit may, in turn, reflect changes in the symbolic association between business and locality.

THE INDUSTRIAL CITY: BALANCE, RISK AND AUTHORITY

Questions of money and responsibility were in the forefront of political debate long before Victoria's reign. However, the growth of cities and the rise of industrial capitalism gave these debates urgency in the first decade of Victoria's reign. Although the typical form of business organisation in the mid-nineteenth century was small, the group of entrepreneurs that were at the forefront of debates about the wealth, responsibility and authority of capital were the cotton masters of the North of England, the most 'visible and vocal' group of entrepreneurs in the 1840s and 1850s (Howe 1984: v). They were visible because they were associated with some of the main political and social questions of the day, the uncertain consequences of the rapid growth of industrial towns and cities; vocal because, in the 1830s and 1840s, they became important leaders, able to use their wealth to broker cultural and political influence, and to deploy the entrepreneurial ideal to articulate a balance between potentially contradictory aspects of capitalism such as, for example, the need for stability and growth.

In the 1840s Manchester in particular came to symbolise both the possibilities and the problems of industrialisation, emphasising the association between provincial businessmen and political economy: *laissez-faire* and non-intervention became a key aspect of the political representation of the cotton masters and a focus for critiques of industrialism. In debates about factory reform, the health of towns and the condition of the working classes, the arguments for non-intervention that were put forward by some employers on the basis of political economy were famously used by critics such as Carlyle to characterise them as philistines. The Manchester man cliché caricatured *laissez-faire* philosophy as the reduction of moral and social questions to the 'cash nexus'. The entrepreneurial ideal repudiated such criticism, and presented economic individualism as an ethos that was held by manufacturers in careful balance with other values and beliefs, and which needed to be understood in relation to other aspects of life.

The place of business needs to be seen in terms of the family strategies of the middle classes, which changed over a life course and in relation to wider social and economic developments. Morris's detailed study of the middle classes in Leeds identifies a property cycle, in which the early years of business were characterised by the need for capital accumulation through the generation of profits from business, while the later years were characterised by the desire to provide security for family through more diverse investments, of which property was likely to be part (Morris 2005). Studies on the wills of middle classes show pre-mortem arrangements were made in the interests of dependents. The purchase of property and land, the winding down of business and the division of wealth before death all formed aspects of middle-class strategy, in which active entrepreneurialism was pursued for social purposes and directed by social values such as responsibility and duty. The desire for social status itself may have been caught up with the need for security for family members; an extension of the attributes of duty and responsibility that were bound with capital accumulation in the nineteenth century (Daunton 1989, 2009).

The world of the entrepreneur was predicated on balance, between risk and stability, and between business and domestic life. Demonstrating such a balance

was an important part of entrepreneurial culture. The autobiographies of entrepreneurs eschew details of private life, however, information about the domestic world was revealed in controlled ways to demonstrate how a balance between home and work is maintained. Some level of comfort, rather than luxury, in domestic life was seen as necessary in demonstrating a degree of high mindedness and the ability to provide for the needs of the family (Gray 1996: x). Making money was important but so was looking after money: unwise investments could threaten the stability and security of the family (Taylor 2006). As the so-called age of atonement came to an end, an age in which poverty and bankruptcy were seen as the suffering to be borne as punishment for unwise actions, commentators considered the numerous ways self-restraint could be exercised (Hilton 1991: 322–32).

Questions about the balance between the laws that govern economic activity and those that determined domestic and spiritual life were part of a broader set of preoccupations with responsibility and duty. Alongside treatises on political economy that formed the reading matter for entrepreneurs was a vast literature on the duties of Christians in trade. The morality of commerce was contemplated in sermons and treatises and the balance between wealth and duty was a perennial cause for concern (Gray 1996: 118). The 1850s in particular saw the publication of a number of tracts on the duties of businessmen. The Anglican vicar of Salford Hugh Stowell challenged the scientific rationality of political economy, and argued in his *Lectures on the Character of Nehemiah* (1854) that business could not be conducted without reference to religion. Commercial men were implored to examine their motives, and a secularised notion of character as a reputation for honesty was, it was argued, no alternative for religiously inspired dedication to work.

Generalised notions of character and gentlemanliness also articulated a balance between self-interest and the social good. Smiles considered self-help as the motor for individual and social improvement, but gentility as the real test of character and the real guide to successful leadership. A true gentleman, according to Smiles, was a man of integrity, who would put his own needs aside for others. However the true test of gentlemanliness was ‘gentleness’: the ability to inspire and lead on the basis of one’s integrity and thus without the need for tyranny (Smiles 1968 [1859]: 260). It is difficult to assess the impact of these strictures on the world of business, however, they show that debates about the ‘stewardship of wealth’ were a central part of industrial culture: an awareness of the need to publicly balance self-interest and the social good, risk and responsibility, competition and stability, can be seen in the ways employers represented themselves (see Howe 1984). Mid-Victorian entrepreneurialism drew on the gentlemanly ideal in presenting personal leadership as the factor that turned innovation into wealth creation.

THE AUTHORITY OF CAPITAL AND THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

The stewardship of wealth in industrial areas was critical because employers were in positions of authority over their workforce. Paternalism emerged as a powerful way of imagining the roles and responsibilities of entrepreneurs in the factory towns of the North of England, presenting the employer as a wise father to the workforce and the workplace as a household requiring benevolent guidance and firm leader-

ship. The power of paternalism lay in its mutability. It drew on well-established hierarchical modes for describing the duties of the landed gentry and, as such, could be used to cast entrepreneurs in the role of the local wealthy with a duty to the local communities. But this way of imagining the duty of capitalism was also bound up with broader ideas of governance, which emphasised the particular experience of employers. The well-managed factory and well-managed capital, the skills of organisation, superintendence and personal acquaintance with workers became closely associated with industrial leadership, itself seen as more important than innovation in creating wealth. As MacLeod has argued, the ‘man of industry’ replaced the inventor as the hero of the hour in the late nineteenth century. In the unveiling of statues of local employers, public addresses celebrated entrepreneurs for job creation and public service. Inventors and manufacturers such as Samuel Cunliffe Lister of Bradford and John Platt of Oldham were commemorated locally as employers of large numbers and for their services to the community and not for their inventions (MacLeod 2007: 332).

Entrepreneurialism could be used by businessmen in other ways to stake a claim to public leadership. The language of business enterprise in its reference to judgement, initiative and coordination was used to argue for the particular abilities of the entrepreneurs to organise voluntary work and local administration. Though charity and philanthropy were often the role of middle-class women, and could be articulated as an extension of domestic duties, more formal aspects of local government was represented as an extension of the duties of business. Public service is seen, quite often, as the logical extension of the skills acquired in business. As the cotton broker Samuel Smith argued in his autobiography: ‘The head of a great firm dealing with foreign countries needs to be a statesman, an economist, and a financier, as well as a merchant. He must have the power of taking a bird’s-eye view of the whole situation; like the general of an army, and like all great commanders, he must be able to discern talent and promote it to a high position’ (Smith 1902: 36). Reuben Spencer, a manager of Rylands and Sons Cotton Manufacturers in Manchester, argued that business tested the qualities required for politics – reliability, trust and integrity – better than anything else (Spencer 1897: 128).

This ability to transpose the expertise of capital into social and political leadership, whilst maintaining the privacy of industry, was a part of the power of mid-Victorian entrepreneurialism. As Howe has argued, the cotton masters were a particular kind of entrepreneur whose investment in fixed capital meant they were closely associated with the town and its people. They were well placed to emerge as the local political elite after the Reform Act of 1832 and they dominated Lancashire politics after 1832, directly representing most seats or being influential in the decision of elections (Howe 1984: 125). The Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 created new roles for local businessmen in local government. Textile manufacturers made up the most numerous occupation group on Lancashire councils in the years 1835–60. Though their qualification for this role was expressed in terms of skills acquired in business, in knowledge of the locality and according to the duties associated with wealth, their authority was based on their ability to build a consensus that fitted with broader political culture in promoting voluntarism and localism (Hewitt 2000: Prologue; Harling 2003).

The autobiographies of businessmen attest to the amount of time devoted to public service. Most give more space to their experiences as public servants than as businessmen. For the most part, the material results of time spent in public service, as members of local committees, councils and voluntary organisations, are ritualistically recorded in descriptions of the parks, libraries and museums that remain as permanent records of the author's diligence in civic affairs. However the manner in which these accounts are narrated shows the significance of debate and consensus to reform. Out of social and ideological diversity a culture was built that emphasised shared values such as independence, fortitude, hard work, fairness and judgement, values that were flexible enough to accommodate political differences. After-dinner speeches, addresses at key civic events are typically reported in ways that register the transformative ability of associations of like-minded men of talent and capability. Though this civic authority was based on localism and entrepreneurialism, it was able to extend itself further. Accounts of the decline of the entrepreneurial spirit have argued that the seeking of public office in roles usually associated with the aristocracy, such as justices of the peace, were a distraction from business and evidence of the search for status (Dintenfass 1999: 176). Nevertheless, the life stories of businessmen recount these events as a logical extension of the duties of capital. Public appointments are prized in highly ritualistic ways as recognition of the important role of businessmen in civic life. In much the same way, the journey from local business to municipal politics and then to Westminster was a reflection, as Reuben Spencer noted, of 'culminating honour in the life of the businessmen that their conduct, liberality, and intelligence should have so won the respect and confidence of a constituency as that they should be asked to be their representative in the national council at Westminster' (Spencer 1897: 125).

THE RISE OF THE PROFESSIONAL

The authority of entrepreneurs in the industrial districts was justified on the basis of the social role of capital, the practical expertise and knowledge acquired from being a successful businessman and employer. However, leadership was undertaken in association with other middle-class men. In fact, the building of consensus depended very much on the expression of a shared set of values and the creation of spaces for dialogue. Organisations such as the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science forged a national liberal culture out of the local expertise of doctors, employers and ministers. Opportunities for engagement were also provided by social spaces in the public culture of the industrial city (Gunn 2000: [Chapter 5](#)). The barrister E. A. Parry described middle-class society in Manchester as closely connected in public life and in social circles: he contrasted the separation of lawyers from other members of the middle classes in the metropolis with the inclusive nature of Manchester (Parry 1912: 73). Links with ministers made by entrepreneurs as members of churches and as agents on voluntary societies and charitable bodies were particularly important (Morris 2005: 318–20). Gray has shown how the ability of ministers to move across boundaries from south to north and from the rural parish to the factory town gave them particular claim to represent the connections between social groups (Gray 1998: 139).

The local leadership of middle-class men was increasingly in tension with the ideals of professional public service, which slowly emerged in the mid to late nineteenth century and which were expressed most forcibly in debates over reform of the civil service. The inefficiencies of the British state, exposed by the Crimean War, were blamed on aristocratic patronage. The Northcote-Trevelyan report of 1854 argued that competitive examinations would reinvigorate systems of administration that had become lethargic, insular and inflexible. The report assigned a greater role to universities in selecting men of ability and talent. As such it was an extension of the principle of open competition in part initiated with the Test and Corporations Act of 1828 and the Catholic emancipation of 1829 (Lubenow 2010: x). The effects of the civil service reform were slow; nevertheless debates gave predominance to models of leadership that emphasised technical education and the disinterested governance of university-educated administrators appointed through open examination. As Goodlad has argued, this principle helped extend and justify aristocratic dominance but it also brought the nature of entrepreneurial leadership into sharp focus (Goodlad 2003: 134). The personal basis of industrial leadership, the emphasis on practical expertise and notions of shared interests, was a very different kind of public accountability than that suggested by civil service (Joyce 2003: 121).

Industrial unrest and social conflict could undermine the legitimacy of industrial leadership. Events such as the Preston strike of 1853–54 were used to challenge the moral authority of capital and to emphasise the social consequences of poor management in: damage to other local businesses and threats to local, even national stability (Dutton and King 1982). Such crises momentarily exposed the limits of liberal consensus and were used to revive concerns about the nature of capitalism and its ability to provide leadership. In much the same way, the cotton famine of the 1860s was used to revive the Manchester man cliché. The term ‘cotton lords’ expressed the hypocrisy of employers who espoused laissez-faire while using their positions in government to lobby for protection for the cotton industry and exercise a feudal hold over their employees. According to *The Times* the ‘Cotton Lords’ were an ‘uneducated Plutocracy’, who wanted to keep workers in a state of dependence so that they are forced to work for wages (*The Times*, 24 March 1863). However, while reports drew on stereotypes of northern industrialists they also revealed something of the increasingly complex networks that employers were a part of. The cotton manufacturers lobbied parliament in the interest of the trade, some of them speculated on the price of cotton, and many were allied to established organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce and new groups such as the Cotton Supply Association whose representatives travelled out to India looking for alternative supplies on behalf, so they claimed, of everyone involved in the cotton trade. Cotton manufacturers were archetypal industrial entrepreneurs but they were, by the 1860s, linked through networks and institutions to gentlemanly capitalists.

GENTLEMANLY CAPITALISM AND EMPIRE

As Cain and Hopkins argue, while the staple industries in the north drove the economy in the early nineteenth century, after 1850 the ‘epicentre’ of the dynamic economy shifted to export industries in the south and banking and investments

businesses based in London (Cain and Hopkins 2002: 41). As agriculture suffered a series of slumps and British manufacturing lost market share to foreign competition, the financial industries based in London, including banking, insurance and commodities, came into their own. The emergence of the City of London as the world's most important financial centre in the first half of the nineteenth century was closely related to the international nature of British trade. Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth century, as Britain's share of trade fell, the City emerged as a global financial centre independent of the rest of the British economy. By 1914 half of all securities listed on the London Stock Exchange were foreign, and over half of the international trade being financed by the City had no connection with Britain. As Michie's study of London shows many foreign banks opened branches in London and many banks brought in personnel from abroad (Michie 2007: 65). London's financial sector was, by the late nineteenth century, a cosmopolitan and diverse body of expertise in global finance.

The rising fortunes of the City of London were associated with the increasing hegemony of gentlemanly capitalism as finance allied with landed interests. The evidence however is contradictory. Whilst aristocratic fortunes could be revived by marrying into successful banking families, many in the financial sector were outsiders in Victorian London society because of their foreign origins (Daunton 2002: 142; Michie 2007: 67). Overseas investments provided some members of the landed elite concerned about the future value of land with opportunities for wealth creation. The Duke of Devonshire, for example, in response to falling rental income between 1874 and 1896, sold his land and invested in international shares (Green 1999: 64). Others managed a diverse range of investments that included manufacturing. Men like the British financier Sir Ernest Cassell, promoted their own investments abroad in the Pacific, in China and in Egypt, but also promoted British business abroad and were happy to invest in British industry at home (Thane 1986). It is also unclear whether British industry suffered from lack of investment as capital flowed out from London to external markets. The typical business remained small in the late nineteenth century and many manufactures were able to access credit if they needed. The 'weight' of finance in the British economy was increasing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; however, the decline of industry needs to not be overstated. The extent to which industry and finance were separate worlds of business needs also to be questioned. The social composition of investors, though difficult to measure, diversified in the nineteenth century: shareholding increased most rapidly amongst women. A broad section of the middle class had access to networks of brokers, which created a provincial market for securities.

The close political and cultural identification of entrepreneurs with industrial cities can obscure their broader global networks. Men like Samuel Smith, the Liverpool cotton broker, travelled to India and Egypt as representatives of the cotton industry, or others travelled alone to explore areas for expansion and investment. Their stories reveal the fluidity and complexity of networks, and of the ability of British industry to look beyond its own horizons. Smith travelled to India on behalf of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to inquire into the potential of Indian cotton growers to supply British industry. Whilst there he travelled on railways being built with British investments, and stayed with British businessmen, such as Hugh Muir, who were actively exploiting the entrepreneurial opportunities that

empire afforded; in Muir's case, using a Bombay office to expand his company's interests from cotton into tea. However, during his travels Smith also stayed with Presbyterian missionaries and local Indian leaders, and was able to incorporate overseas travel into a culture of capitalism in which social and economic interests were combined. Smith promoted his own business interests during his trip – he eventually became a partner in the firm of Finlay, Muir and Co. He promoted the cotton industry, meeting with the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and writing to the *Times of India* to share his expertise on Indian cotton. However, he also used his trip to promote social causes, using his engagements to speak authoritatively on social problems in India. He wrote articles about trade, poverty and religion and took up a campaign to limit the sale of alcohol in India to the Houses of Parliament. British merchants and industrialists travelled overseas not just as lobbyists for British industry, but as entrepreneurs and, as Smith shows, as liberal subjects interested in 'improvement' (Hazareesingh 2009: 8).

Business networks militated against any simple north–south divide: patterns of share ownership show that provincial industry was connected to the city, and networks of institutions such as the Chambers of Commerce provided links from the metropolis to industrial and manufacturing towns. Nevertheless, the increasing weight of financial capitalism did challenge the representation of industry and locality that Victorian industrialists had cultivated. London emerged as a centre and concentration of market expertise whose proximity to government and claims to knowledge of global finance was used to gain influence with policy makers (Cassis 1994: 316). Debates over tariff reform and bimetallism show that the complex cross currents in attitudes to the British economy cannot be reduced to a straightforward 'City versus industry' or 'production versus services' conflict. The City was a diverse body with a range of political perspectives; however, individuals and groups could influence economic policy on the basis of their knowledge of complex global market systems and in full awareness of the importance of their earnings to the economy (Green 1999: 59, 67).

These new forms of market expertise emerged alongside an entrepreneurial heroism that embraced adventure and recklessness and challenged the hegemony of the local industrialist that was premised on organisational skills, personal knowledge of the workforce and balance. The repudiation of the liberal politics of the provincial middle class was clear in the rhetoric of men like Chamberlain, who claimed that 'The moral grandeur of the nation depends upon its sometimes being able to forget itself, sometimes [being] able to think of the future of the race for which it stands' (Cain 2007: 266). The extent to which the character of imperial manhood was more in tune with the age is a matter of some debate; however it is clear that finance was generating its own concepts of entrepreneurialism. As writers such as Schumpeter defined entrepreneurialism in terms of innovation and creativity, it was freed from associations with the production of things and the skills of organisation and personal leadership, and might even include investment itself (Schumpeter 2004 [1911]: 75–78).

The changing nature of capitalism and the increased mobility of the provincial middle class were beginning to loosen the association between entrepreneurs and the industrial city. The family firm was still the dominant form of business organisation until the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, although limited

liability spread slowly, it steadily changed the culture of business by enabling businessmen and investors to broaden their horizons further, taking interests, shares or directorships in other companies. This increased mobility was echoed in patterns of residence as families branched out from the industrial town or city. As Gunn has shown, by 1900 many employers in Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds had a number of homes: a family home in the suburbs, a townhouse in London and a retreat much like Smith's estate of Orchill in Scotland (Gunn 2000: 195). This mobility did not necessarily sever a close identification with place. As Smith's life story shows, many businessmen identified with the provincial city, the place that they first started business, despite having long since moved. It does however suggest that a definition of entrepreneurialism that linked the self and the city was becoming outmoded.

CONCLUSION

For Schumpeter, entrepreneurship 'put its stamp on an epoch of social history, can form a style of life, or systems of moral and aesthetic values, but in itself it signifies a class position no more than it presupposes one' (Schumpeter 2004 [1911]: 78). The power of the industrial middle class in the mid-nineteenth century lay in its ability to use an entrepreneurial ideal to create a collective identity around the transformative effects of their businesses. The local leadership of provincial businessmen was typically expressed with reference to practical expertise acquired through running a business, and the personal knowledge of the people through shared experiences of work. However, the changing nature of capitalism challenged this representation. The increasingly complex nature of corporate business forms could undermine the personal supervision and practical knowledge that featured so heavily in the entrepreneurial ideal. Similarly, the city itself was changing. The claims that capital could make to represent the city had to adapt to the political rights of labour; the all-male associations of regulation and reform had to accommodate the increasing public presence of women.

The association made between business and political leadership was an important but weakening feature of the public culture of industrial towns and cities in the late nineteenth century. This period saw an uneven but general decrease in the numbers of large businessmen represented on local councils, and a general increase in mobility that enabled businesses to loosen long-held ties with localities (Gunn 2000: 192–93). The expansion of limited liability gradually loosened the association between individual businessmen, firms and the locality (see Cottrell 1980: [Chapter 5](#)). The large-scale corporate business form demanded technical expertise, managements and team work, a model of entrepreneurialism that did not fit quite so well with Smilesean self-making. It is, however, important not to overstate this case – despite the increased mobility that coincided with limited liability, and the increasing emphasis given to technical expertise and management, entrepreneurialism was still linked to innovation and successful businessmen still demonstrated a firm attachment to place. At the turn of the century, the local connections of entrepreneurs were a central part of their celebration as national heroes.

The Leeds Biographer noted its intention to publish the stories of local public men as an example and a spur to men who had as yet not undertaken any

public service; its narratives were intended to be, like the exemplary narrative of Smiles's *Self Help*, didactic. But the attempt to remind readers of the transformation that had occurred over Victoria's reign and the role of entrepreneurs, with other members of the local middle class, is significant. Publications such as *The Leeds Biographer* emerged alongside a glut of autobiographies of self-made men, which intertwined a history of self and place. Such stories demonstrated an awareness of the need to historicise the practices of self-reflection and social change that the industrial city represented. As the preface to *The Leeds Biographer* shows, the collection of biographies was intended to celebrate the achievements of local notables, but it also expressed a desire to put the bourgeoisie at the centre of history: the authors may well have been aware if not of decline, then that they were increasingly writing from the margins of history.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

MONEY'S WORTH

Morality, class, politics



Timothy Alborn

IN 1819 Robert Peel posed what might have been the most frequently repeated rhetorical question of the nineteenth century, when he asked, in the midst of a parliamentary debate over the resumption of cash payments by the Bank of England: ‘What is a pound?’.¹ After citing the confusion that this question had caused for John Locke and Isaac Newton in an earlier era of monetary controversy, Peel reached the apparently straightforward conclusion that a pound was ‘a definite quantity of gold bullion . . . with an impression on it denoting it to be of a certain weight and of a certain fineness’. He added that requiring the bank to exchange gold for its paper currency would restore to Britain its ‘ancient and permanent standard of value’ (cited in Smart 1910: 678–79). Although few Victorians doubted that a pound signified ‘a definite quantity of gold bullion’, they kept repeating Peel’s question because it enabled them to ask a series of related questions about how gold worked, or failed to work, in British culture. This chapter recounts their persistent efforts to figure out what their money was worth in light of Britain’s changing status within the global economy; and traces evidence of their love–hate relationship with money in the realms of morality and social class.

In all three domains of morality, social class, and politics, Victorians determined the worth of money by transmuting a cluster of contradictions into a conservative celebration of wealth and power. Morally, money sat precariously between the sacred and the profane: bankers and politicians defended the sacrosanct nature of gold as a basis of value, even as evangelicals and radicals condemned society’s worship of mammon. Socially, money went from being a largely local means of exchange to being a symbol of national greatness by the end of the nineteenth century, reinforced by financial institutions that consistently refined credit’s reproductive powers even as they periodically brought the economy to the brink of ruin. In the realm of politics, Britons lined up behind the gold standard’s alleged ability to stabilize the economy, conveniently overlooking the mixed effects produced by decades of deflation and the vulnerable position that a strong pound recurrently imposed on their trading partners. Without necessarily intending to do so, moral outrage about money and its associated vices – most famously vented by John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle – made it easier for most Victorians to live

with money's contradictory tendencies at the level of class and politics, by diverting their attention from institutions to individuals. The personal vices of avarice, idolatry, and speculation emerged as immoral exceptions to the rule, which explained away the underside of Britain's ascent as a world economic power.

MAMMON-WORSHIP: MONEY AND MORALITY

Victorians, besides being famously commercial, were famously moral. And money, besides being the engine of Victorian prosperity, was famously the root of all evil. This combination of loving and loathing money reflected a deeper ambivalence about capitalism, which anguished moralists with its potential for indiscipline even as it mapped out a virtuous path for the achievement of reward (Wiener 1993). The gold standard helped square this circle by allying money with discipline; but money more generally, especially once its ambit expanded to include various forms of credit, reintroduced a dangerous element of excess. And even on its own, gold was as likely to denote avarice or idolatry as to betoken honour or virtue – especially when the rising tide of evangelical Christianity added its weighty ballast to the scale. The Scottish clergyman William Tweedie observed in 1855 that 'we must extract a large portion of the Bible if we would really set forth its teaching on the use and abuse of money' (Tweedie 1855: 52) – and several generations of Victorians did exactly that.

Writing about the eighteenth century, the historian Deborah Valenze has claimed that the 'detoxification' of money was well under way by that century's end, as moralists found cause to focus on its redemptive capacity, and shifted their chagrin from money itself to its abuse. Money, she argues, became a measure of status, a judicial incentive (in the form of rewards for wanted criminals), and a vehicle of philanthropy – emerging, alongside the Enlightenment, as 'a universal instrument of personal agency'. She makes her case by citing John Wesley's sermon on 'The Use of Money': 'let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame? ... The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it' (Valenze 2006: 260–61). Victorians, living in the overlapping shadows of the Enlightenment and evangelical Christianity, evolved new ways of thinking and writing about money as a measure of personal character, entailing an endless drawing and redrawing of boundaries between its use and abuse. In the process, they preserved ample space in which its pungent toxicity was seldom far from view.

Money came into its own in the nineteenth century as a measure of reward and punishment for social behaviour. 'Money is a terrible blab', as Edward Bulwer Lytton put it; 'she will betray the secrets of her owner whatever he do to gag her. His virtues will creep out in her whisper – his vices she will cry aloud at the top of her tongue' (Lytton 1868: 62). As self-assured participants in a cult of saving, Victorians measured their worth by reading stock market indices, bank deposit books, and Post Office stamp books. At one end of this extreme, the term *millionaire* entered the English language from the French at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and soon became a commonplace for 'a man of great wealth' (Ogilvie 1884, III: 171). At the other, advocates of thrift equated virtue with an incremental storing up of 'small sums ... wisely laid up for the day of trial' (cited

in Payne 1967: 172). Insurance companies further monetized life by precisely calculating the payments that were necessary for breadwinners to provide for their dependents if they suffered an untimely death.

Money – or rather, its absence – also increasingly signified punishment in the Victorian period. Bankruptcy, as Barbara Weiss has argued, was ‘the hell of the English’, in Victorian novels as well as in everyday life. A series of laws passed between the 1840s and the 1880s, attaching penal sanctions to unpaid loans, arose from a consensus that debt was subversive of ‘national morality’ (Weiss 1986: 33–34; see Finn 2003: 152–93), and riches-to-rags stories garnered at least as much celebrity as their converse (Evans 1859). In this new moral economy, bankers and insurers warmed to the task of presiding over personal worth. Bank managers bragged that their loans enabled ‘men of good motives’ to ‘obtain *rank* or *cast* in the town’ (Alborn 1998a: 107). Taking a page out of evangelical sermons (which, as Callum Brown has argued, were themselves subject to a ‘salvation economy’ that hinged on new assumptions about consumer choice), insurance salesmen told melodramatic tales of uninsured providers on their deathbeds, who rued their failure to turn their lives into financial sufficiency for their loved ones (Brown 2001: 35–57; Alborn 2009: 148–57).

A survey of moral connotations of gold, the tangible basis of Victorian currency and a frequent symbol of wealth in all its aspects, provides a convenient accounting of the era’s ambivalent perspective on money more generally. Defenders of a gold-backed currency referred to it as a ‘sacred standard’ since it provided ‘an impartial measure of value, common to all goods’ (Hilton 1988: 127), but gold symbolized earthly reward as well. Gold medals, boxes, cups and plates weighed down the mantelpieces of successful Victorians in arenas ranging from scholarship to art, horticulture and horseracing. The Royal Society of Arts annually issued dozens of gold and silver medals in order to entice invention; reports always included the worth of each medal (typically 30 or 50 guineas) and the Society always offered inventors the option of accepting the cash value. Starting in 1864, it honoured the top innovators of the era with a memorial Albert Gold Medal: the first went to Rowland Hill for the penny post, and other recipients included Michael Faraday, Charles Wheatstone, and Justus von Liebig (Becker 1875: 67–68).

Victorians found ample biblical testimony that God approved of their choice of gold as an arbiter of worldly worth. Although gold in the Bible could be corrupted and cankered, it also shone as a symbol of purity, incontestable truth, and inestimable value. When evangelists sought support for their frequent claim that ‘afflictions are the appointed lot of the family of God’, as J. C. Philpot did in a letter to a friend in 1860, they appealed to the metaphor of ‘a furnace in which gold and silver are refined’: in the ‘spiritual furnace’, Philpot concluded, the ‘dross and scum of our evil hearts’ gave way to ‘the pure gold of faith’ (Philpot 1871: 281). As the pavement of choice in heaven, gold took on new meaning in Victorian sermons and hymns as its earthly availability increased. *The Christian Emigrant’s Guide to Heaven* described that destination’s ‘abundance of fine gold . . . that dazzles ten thousand Perus, and Ophirs, and Californias, into the shades of everlasting darkness’ (Dodsworth 1853: 83).

Yet if on one side of the balance ranged a phalanx of biblical metaphors linking gold to purity, honour, and virtue, on the other side rested the vices of avarice,

miserliness, idolatry, and greed. Avarice was an age-old theme in English letters, including Mr Money-love in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Shakespeare's rebuke of 'glittering gold' in *Timon of Athens*. Victorians energetically diverted these tropes to their favourite targets of moral outrage, including child labour, slavery, and financial speculation. The radical Tory Richard Oastler spent the 1830s accusing factory owners of pretending a 'false assumed Christianity which suffers Moloch to grind factory children as the grist, to amass dirty heaps of filthy gold' (Anon. 1835: 14); abolitionists, from whom he stole most of his best material, had by that point spent decades recycling and elaborating William Cowper's reference to planters as 'slaves of gold' in 'The Negro's Complaint' (Cowper 1800, I: 333).

As abolitionism and factory reform receded into the mists of solved or forgotten problems, financial speculation took their place as a focal point of public censure. In discussing this more ambiguous symptom of avarice, which rested somewhere between gambling and investment in Victorian reckonings (Itzkowitz 2009), they tempered their condemnation with the more neutral discourse of medical diagnosis. An 1867 treatise on 'the nervous system and its derangements' identified 'the lust of gold' and 'the mad desire to accumulate wealth' as 'fertile sources of nervous disease, too often eventuating in insanity' (cited in Beddoes 1890: 164). Victorians passed the same judgment on misers, whose avarice drove them to the opposite extreme of saving money to an unhealthy degree. The author of *Lives and Anecdotes of Misers; or, The Passion of Avarice Displayed* distinguished the miser's 'senseless fondness for the yellow metal' from the frugal man's virtuous desire 'to refrain from useless expenditure' (Merryweather 1850: 37–38).

A close relative of avarice was idolatry, or what Thomas Carlyle called 'Mammon-Gospel' (Carlyle 1847: 146; see Herbert 2002: 188–89). Perhaps the most enduring biblical idol was the golden calf, which Moses's followers forged out of their melted-down jewelry while waiting for him to descend from Mount Sinai. Victorian religious writers eagerly invoked this story as a lesson for modern-day mammon worshippers, when they were not using it to deride Papists and Jews.² But golden calves made numerous secular appearances as well. James Fennimore Cooper named the wealthy English narrator of *The Minikins* Sir John Goldencalf; Douglas Jerrold skewered 'the Order of the Golden Calf . . . a lean-faced, low-browed, thick-jowled, swag-bellied brotherhood . . . cased in the magic mail of impenetrable Bank-paper' (Jerrold 1852: 322); and several Victorian novels bore the title *The Golden Calf*. One of these recounted the rise and fall of the railway speculator John Snobson (the millionaire George Hudson in paper-thin disguise), for whom his shareholders raise a huge subscription shortly before his financial empire crumbles. 'Their filthy lucre', concludes the author, 'which might have been purified by passing through the waters of Charity . . . ran in the common sewer of national cupidity, till it reached the great cloaca of corruption' (Anon. 1849, II: 248).³

At the heart of most such depictions was an indictment of Victorians, by their angry peers, of barefaced hypocrisy. John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle earned much of their celebrity by exposing Britain's dual worship of God and gold. 'The writings which we (verbally) esteem as divine', Ruskin declaimed in *'Unto This Last'*, 'not only denounce the love of money as . . . an idolatry abhorred of the Deity, but declare mammon service to be the accurate and irreconcilable opposite of God's

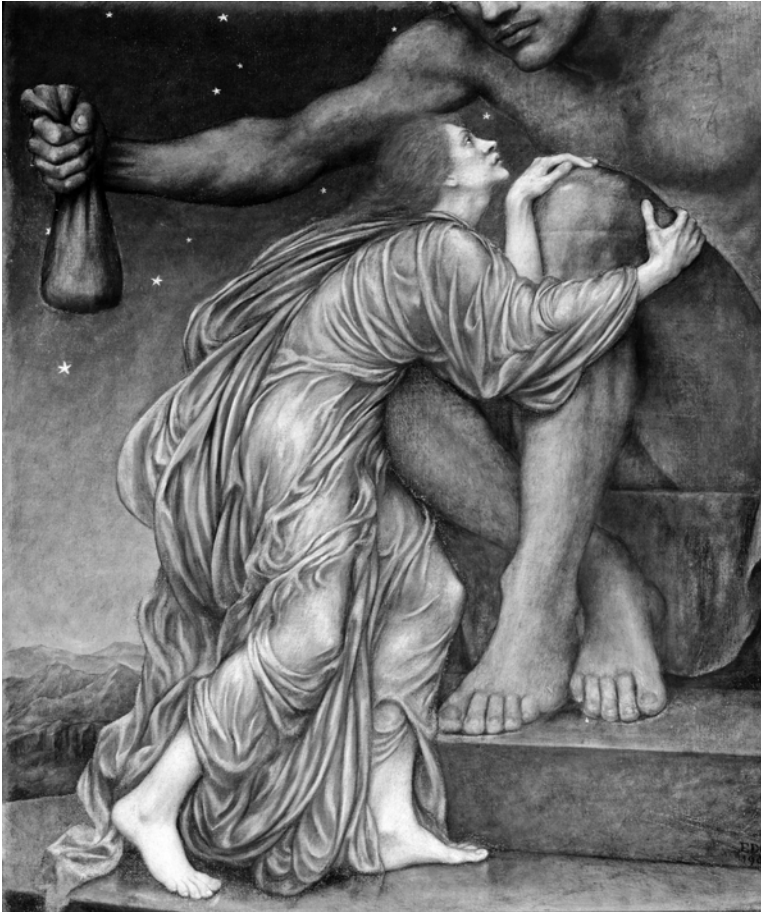


Figure 11.1 *The Worship of Mammon*, 1909 (oil on canvas), Morgan, Evelyn De (1855–1919)/© The De Morgan Centre, London/The Bridgeman Art Library

service' (Ruskin 1881: 88–89). Carlyle took a more nuanced, if ultimately no less bitter, view. The 'supreme triumph of Cash', he observed, required a 'changed Aristocracy' (Carlyle 1858: 36). Elsewhere, he compared false heroes with forged bank notes: 'we can do with some . . . but not with all, or the most of them forged! . . . the notes all being false, and no gold to be had for *them*, people take to crying in their despair that there is no gold, that there never was any!' (Carlyle 1841: 19).

Mainly, though, Victorians were more inclined than such jeremiads would suggest to take the evil that money wrought with a grain of salt – or a grain of gold. The Methodist author of *The Successful Merchant* (1852) echoed Wesley when he contrasted 'gold which rusts and cankers' with 'gold well gotten', which was 'bright and fair' (Arthur 1885: 207). In a similar vein, the goal of a mid-century collection of prize essays entitled *Gold and the Gospel* was to survey 'the scriptural duty of giving in proportion to means and income' (Anon. 1871: title page). More generally,

most Victorians were quite content to live with the ambiguity that their chosen standard of value implied. This was the bemused stance of Grant Allen in the *Cornhill Magazine*, who referred to gold as ‘the medium of exchange, the enemy of virtue, and the chief standard of value in all civilized countries’ (Allen 1887: 38).

What held for gold also held for the superstructure of bank notes, cheques, and other credit instruments that rested on its base. Patrick Brantlinger has charted the efforts of Victorian novelists to render money more reliable by diverting its sordid side from financial and political institutions, to tales of extravagant personal vice or foreign (including Jewish) caricature (Brantlinger 1996: 140–46, 154–59). Dickens delivered immortal indictments of Merdle, Fagan, and Scrooge, but he also referred to the Bank of England in tones that ranged from ‘gently mocking’ to ‘fulsomely patriotic and even quasi-religious’ (Brantlinger 1996: 160). Christopher Herbert has likewise aptly linked ‘the incurably paradoxical self-contradicting character of Victorian money’ to the era’s ‘devotion to the principle of closing its eyes systematically to unwelcome realities’ (Herbert 2002: 193, 186). As Dickens’s praise of the Bank of England suggests, an important consequence of Victorians’ ability to live with money’s contradictory character was that most of them stopped well short of making connections between personal moral failings (as measured in the abuse of money) and institutional culpability. As a result, outcries against filthy lucre seldom interfered in any significant way with the titanic expansion of monetary instruments and institutions throughout British society and across the British Empire over the course of the nineteenth century.

CIRCULATING COIN AND PAPER: MONEY AND SOCIAL CLASS

In 1862 the humourist John Hollingshead repeated Peel’s question: ‘What is a Pound?’ – this time as ‘a currency allegory’. The allegory involves two ‘ordinary dustmen’, Daisy and Crabshells, whose occupation brings them into contact with ‘a tarnished sovereign’, and who spend the rest of the story first ascertaining its identity, then its worth (Hollingshead 1862: 83–84). Since commodity culture was largely illegible to these illiterate dustmen, they barely notice the ‘glaring placards appealing to this pound’, asking it to ‘insure its life against all accidents’, to use ‘a particular kind of pickle’, or to wear ‘the only trouser that was considered elegant’ (Hollingshead 1862: 86–87). Instead, they wind their way uncertainly from shop to shop, testing the coin’s ‘purchasing capability’ against the divided forces of stationery, heraldry, kitchenware, fine china, menswear, and tea. Bewildered and exhausted, they settle down for ‘supper an’ a drink’: a full meal for four silver shillings, followed by a ‘novel punch’ comprised of sixteen shillings’ worth of port, champagne, and enough beer for it to taste ‘more like beer’. Spent, they return to the street, having ‘opened the gates of knowledge, variety, and plenty’ with their ‘golden key’ (Hollingshead 1862: 95–96).

This humorous answer to ‘What is a pound?’ taught that money carried vastly different meanings and manifestations for Victorians depending on their social class. This hardly meant that they were oblivious to money – not least in regard to the coin that jingled in their pockets. Regarding the availability of trustworthy coin, Victorians enjoyed a distinct advantage over preceding generations, starting

with shillings and crowns. A sufficiency of shillings, in fact, was one of the primary aims of the Coinage Act of 1816. Besides declaring gold to be legal tender, this law required the state to mint silver coins that circulated at less than face value and hence were not liable to being melted down and exported as bullion. New steam technology enabled the mint to stamp shillings that were less prone to being counterfeited, and rectified an endemic shortage that had long been a source of embarrassment to British officials (Quinn 2004: 152–53). Joining the shilling as token coins were crowns (five shillings), half-crowns, and sixpenny and threepenny pieces (all silver); and pennies, half-pennies, farthings and half-farthings – which went from being copper to bronze in 1860 (Poovey 2002: 7–8).

Turning from token currency to sterling, the Coinage Act also introduced a new gold coin, called the sovereign, which (valued at 20 shillings) succeeded the slightly heavier guinea (worth 21 shillings). The name was not new – sovereigns, worth between ten and 22 shillings, had circulated under Tudor and Stuart monarchs. Nor did guineas entirely disappear: as denominations, if not as actual coins, they remained ‘dear to the hearts of all professional persons, and revered by the collectors of charitable subscriptions’ (Anon. 1896: 814), and a ‘hundred guinea brooch’ was the centerpiece of Anthony Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds* (Trollope 1876: 114). As for the sovereign, its history during the Victorian era physically embodied the transition from the fiscal restraint of Gladstonian Liberalism to the imperial ambitions of late-century Conservatives. After Tories paid for a recoinage in the 1840s, Liberal politicians awkwardly stood by during the next four decades while wear and tear reduced nearly half of all circulating sovereigns to below their legal weight. Finally in 1891, Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer George Goschen paid for another recoinage – in the process replacing the young Victoria’s effigy with a more realistic middle-aged portrait (Alborn 1998b).

As coin circulated throughout Victorian Britain, a rich vocabulary accompanied it. One slang dictionary from 1874 counted more than 130 slang terms for money, both as a general term (including *chink*, *feathers*, and *needful*) and applied to specific coins: no fewer than 17 terms for sixpence (including *kick*, *cripple*, and *tizzy*) and 11 for a shilling (*breaky-leg* and *twelver* as well as *bob*) (Hotten 1874: 61–63). This fecundity of names accompanied a stable set of state-issued coins, all with images of Queen Victoria stamped on their faces – in stark contrast to the diversity of token and foreign coins that had once circulated in Britain. Although paper money (fixed at a five-pound minimum in England) increasingly bore the Bank of England’s stamp in the nineteenth century, some provincial banks continued to issue their own notes into the 1920s (Mathias 1969: 356). Scots, for their part, fiercely held onto their right to exchange one-pound notes (Rowlinson 1999).

In addition to bank notes, an expanding variety of other credit instruments made their influence felt through all classes of Victorian society. The most spectacular of these were the stocks and bonds that fueled the meteoric rise of railways and other public companies starting in the 1820s. Compared to the eighteenth century, when investment was primarily limited to the aristocracy and the ‘monied interest’, and consisted in government bonds and a few chartered company shares, a wider variety of stocks came within the reach of more people after 1820. New stock exchanges formed in 1836 in Manchester and Liverpool to meet the provincial demand, and the financial journalist David Morier Evans captured the popular

perception that mid-century speculation extended ‘from the peer to the peasant’ (Evans 1849: 52). Even those who did not actually handle credit in its more rarified forms could read about it in novels and news accounts that attracted readers with the promise (never fully delivered) to demystify the money market (Poovey 2002: 11, 25–32). A new demand for this form of knowledge, in turn, blurred lines between fact and fiction, as writers such as Evans borrowed narrative strategies from novelists – and vice versa, for novelists such as Charles Reade – in order both to dramatize and naturalize the workings of the new credit economy (Poovey 2008: 243–75, 324–28).

Less spectacular forms of credit reached even further into Victorian society. Banks, which seldom paid interest for deposits before 1850, began to compete for this business as they extended branches throughout the country. Around the same time, life insurance companies popularized the practice of paying ‘bonuses’ to policyholders, who thereby shared in the interest generated by their premiums. Farther down the social scale, savings banks and friendly societies emerged as vehicles of investment, sponsored by charities, trade unions, and the government. By 1914, the combined forces of bank deposits, insurance premiums, and self-help subscriptions added more than £2 billion to the capital market (Alborn 2009: 167). Besides acting as creditors for the first time, Victorian working people also borrowed in newly formal ways. Building societies turned credit into a variant of self-help, pawnbrokers mushroomed in industrial cities, and shopkeepers formed ‘guardian societies’ to help regulate the vast spread – and frequent abuse – of retail credit (Tebbutt 1983; Finn 2003: 289–306).

The various forms of money that changed hands in Britain reflected the complex amalgam of local, regional, cosmopolitan, and national identities that marked the Victorian era. Money retained distinctive local meanings when people translated denominations into local dialect, and domestically circulating credit (whether in the form of privately issued bank notes, bills of exchange, company shares, or pawn tickets) often bore a local or regional stamp. As bullion, money was cosmopolitan, as were the foreign and colonial bonds that became increasingly prominent features on the London Stock Exchange by the end of the nineteenth century (O’Connor forthcoming). In most regards, however, Victorian money operated as a nationalizing agent, replacing locally minted tokens and regionally circulating paper with state-minted coins and Bank of England notes, and reinforcing distinctions among nations. Although a world war sharpened the economist Alfred Marshall’s appreciation of these developments, his observation was accurate enough as a description of the late nineteenth century:

national currency has been a chief symbol of national unity . . . as metallic money has yielded precedence to modern instruments of credit, national trade has focused itself around the national banking system . . . [and] all have been associated with the national purse filled by common effort and devoted to the attainment of national ideals.

(Marshall 1923: 9–10)

Like national identity, money marshalled an array of arbitrary symbols that commanded value, and like national identity it found increasingly firm institutional bases in the nineteenth century. Karl Marx was thus doubly confounded

when he referred to money as 'only the appearance of matters' and predicted that the nation-state would wither away with the triumph of capital (Marx 1959, III: 337). As more Victorians came to grip money, they came to grips with its meaning as mediated by instruments of credit, financial institutions, and a wide array of cultural productions. This rendered them less inclined to follow Marx in piercing the appearances and seeing what he defined as the real essence of value – the product of their own labour. The peculiar quality of money itself, as both a thing and a sign, reinforced this inclination (Ingham 1984: 84–95). It also enabled Victorians to accomplish something else that Marx assumed to be unlikely to survive as capitalism matured: the capacity to pursue simultaneously, if uneasily, the largely contradictory dictates of Christian morality and the pursuit of wealth.

POLITICAL ECONOMY: GOLD, TRADE, CREDIT

Robert Peel's definition of a pound in 1819 as 'a definite quantity of gold bullion', which he would repeat in 1844 by way of supporting new legislation that extended the gold standard's reach, was not wholly accurate when he first uttered it. Prior to 1797, when the Bank suspended cash payments, its customers could demand either silver or gold in exchange for their notes; the fact that they asked for the latter stemmed from the artificially low price of silver relative to gold that had been in effect since 1696. Not until 1816, in anticipation of the resumption of cash payments, did Parliament officially declare gold to be the nation's only legal tender for all transactions exceeding 20 shillings (Quinn 2004: 152–53). Once cash payments resumed in 1821, the Bank of England was legally liable to exchange its notes for gold bullion at a rate of £3 17s 9d per ounce (just over five ounces of gold for every £20 note). Since most other banks, by that time, held Bank of England notes in reserve against their paper currency, the Bank performed the role of backing the nation's supply of paper money with its gold reserves. For most of the nineteenth century, it held ample reserves for this purpose. The main exceptions were times of 'overtrading' (when lenders issued an excess of paper money and other forms of credit) and sudden drains of bullion in exchange for grain in times of dearth.

The main argument in favour of the gold standard was that no other basis would be as successful at providing stable prices, which politicians wishfully associated with stable social and political relations. And compared to other economies in the nineteenth century, and other periods in British history, prices were at least relatively stable throughout the Victorian era. They fell from inflated wartime levels by an average of 5 per cent per year in the decade after Waterloo, and continued to decline through the torpid 1840s. They proceeded to rise by around 2 per cent per year between 1849 and 1873, fell by the same amount during the 'Great Depression' of 1873–96, and recovered once more in the years leading up to 1914. Compared to countries that spent most of the century off the gold standard – such as Austria, Russia and China – this generally qualified as stable. Defenders of the gold standard could also point to the much greater price fluctuations that had accompanied inconvertible paper during the Napoleonic Wars – an 80 per cent increase in Britain and astronomical inflation in France (Ferguson 2001: 147, 328–30; Davis 2002: 305).

Although swings in the value of the pound never shook Britain's faith in the gold standard, they did generate recurrent criticisms. The inflationary consequences

of a weak pound drew the ire of creditors, who received interest payments in devalued currency: these included bankers, holders of public debt and (to the extent that tenants paid fixed long-term rents) landlords. A strong pound, coinciding with a tight money supply, favoured financiers throughout the nineteenth century. It also favoured export-oriented manufacturers by reducing the cost of wages and imported raw materials, but only when they had enough comparative advantage over foreign rivals to overcome the high prices that their goods fetched abroad – and this ceased to be the case after 1870. It punished farmers, especially after the repeal of the Corn Laws, by increasing rental payments and reducing the price of rival grain imports. Throughout the century, the effects of fluctuating prices on workers were mixed, and endlessly debated: a strong pound kept prices low but accompanied high unemployment; and although jobs were easier to find under inflation, consumer price increases tended to outstrip wage increases.

Critics of the gold standard targeted three sources of price instability: gold supplies, the value of gold relative to silver, and the role of credit in the economy. Complicating any such diagnosis was the problem that swings in economic activity (which came to be known as the business cycle) were both causes and effects of changes in money supply. A booming economy typically accompanied inflation, trade depressions were deflationary, and it was seldom possible to disentangle cause and effect. Politically, however, it was always more convenient for critics to target a state-mandated monetary standard or the arbitrary actions of Bank of England directors, since these could theoretically be remedied.

The most easily comprehended monetary cause of price instability concerned the amount of actual gold bullion that existed in the vaults of the Bank at any given time. War and a sudden demand for imports drained the country of gold, while new supplies had the potential to swamp it. Until the very end of the Victorian era, the impact of war on money supply mainly existed in people's memory of rising prices and a booming economy during the Napoleonic Wars. Because postwar deflation persisted into the 1840s, many merchants who had prospered during the war condemned the gold standard as unfairly privileging Britain's public creditors over their own interests. Indeed, one of the state's main incentives for getting inflation under control had been to reward its creditors with repayment in full-value currency (Hilton 1977: 63–65). This promise rang hollow to middle-class radicals like the Birmingham banker Thomas Attwood, who had made a fortune lending paper money to arms manufacturers during the war, and who complained loudly and frequently to Peel after the war that 'the pressure of the standard of value' was 'crushing . . . both workmen and employers under its burthen' (Attwood 1837: 3–4).

A demand for imports reduced gold supplies only in exceptional circumstances. The primary function of gold in British trade had always been to balance accounts; and although Britain suffered a growing trade deficit in the nineteenth century, this was usually offset by income from foreign investment, shipping, and insurance – without which surplus the gold standard would have been unthinkable (Mathias 1969: 303–8). The only exception to this rule occurred during bad harvests, when grain-exporting countries (mainly Prussia and Russia) demanded their ransom in bullion. In 1838–39, grain imports drained the Bank of upwards of £10 million in bullion, which prevented it from extending credit at a time when manufacturers

needed it most (Mathias 1969: 230). The money supply thereby took centre stage in the debate over the Corn Law, which had been in effect since 1815. Protectionists argued that bullion drains would be a regular occurrence under free trade, while their opponents countered that a 'steady trade' with grain-producing nations, which was impossible under the Corn Law, would, 'instead of draining your coffers, give fresh life and spirit to your manufactures' (Elliot 1841: 8). Distracted by grain prices, relatively few contemporaries noticed that the newly strong pound had made British exports so expensive that Americans, who normally absorbed a large share of British textiles, were unable to spend their way out of a commercial depression of their own between 1836 and 1843 (Kelly 1840: 48).

The only remaining strictly monetary cause of British price instability during the nineteenth century was world gold production, which remained relatively constant until the Californian and Australian 'rushes' of 1849 and 1852. Gold output, which averaged 42 tons per year in the 1840s, increased twentyfold in the succeeding decade, as waves of emigrants flocked to San Francisco and Melbourne (Ferguson 2001: 331). Those who had ascribed the Hungry Forties to Peel's deflationary monetary policies luxuriated in the influx of gold and the inflation they assumed would accompany it. 'Providence [has] revealed these hidden treasures to a suffering world' was how *Blackwood's Magazine*, long a haven for anti-hard money sentiment, greeted the Australian gold rush (Alison 1852: 203); another *Blackwood's* writer anticipated that the inflationary effects of the new gold would extend suffrage (since an £8 rental would now be worth £10), give 'wings' to railways and steam navigation, and open trade with India and China (Patterson 1863: 516–20). Politicians such as Peel, who had always defended their tight-fisted monetary policies on the 'natural' scarcity of gold, generally did not demur, since they had painted themselves into a rhetorical corner; but they did emphasize that inflation would be gradual and unlikely to disrupt business as usual (Fetter 1965: 242–46).

In fact, the inflationary consequences of the gold rushes proved to be relatively mild and remarkably short-lived. Part of the reason was that returns from the 'diggings' in California and Australia soon diminished. Most of the reason, though, was that Britain's two leading commercial rivals adopted the gold standard: first Germany in 1871 (after leavening its coffers with reparation payments following the Franco-Prussian War), then the United States in 1879 (after 17 years of using Civil War-induced 'greenbacks'). Although British onlookers routinely ascribed these conversions to national hubris – in Germany's case, its 'traditional policy ... to obtain glory by following every road that leads to it' (Grenfell 1881: 942) – both countries had sound reasons to make the move. German industry relied on British loans, which were cheaper to repay in gold. Americans hungered for stable prices, much as the British had done after Waterloo, and a strong dollar made it easier to attract foreign capital to their growing manufacturing sector. The result, amplified by new American silver discoveries, was to drive up the value of gold relative to silver, and drive down British prices by 3 per cent a year between 1873 and 1886 (Eichengreen 1996: 17–19).

Even after others joined Germany and the United States on the gold standard (France and Scandinavia in the 1870s, followed by Russia and Japan by 1900), the Bank of England had little trouble attracting enough gold to back its notes.

Indeed, British financiers in general prospered between 1880 and 1914, as they shifted from home to foreign investment – since for the first time they could depend on most foreign loans being repaid in full-value currency. Not all sectors of the British economy were so fortunate, however. Farmers suffered from heavier mortgage payments, and manufactures watched with concern as demonetized silver swamped India and China. This wrought havoc in those countries, where imports became punishingly expensive and foreign investment vanished (Davis 2002: 303–5), but it also took its toll on British industry, which now had to contend with inexpensive Asian goods as well as ‘cheap and nasty’ German and American imports. In an attempt to balance the playing field, a robust bimetallist movement sprang up in Britain that ‘achieved little or nothing, but . . . illustrated much’ – not least ‘a substantial increase in the importance of the banking and service sector’ (Green 1988: 607). Prodded by City bankers, the Colonial Office efficiently dispensed with their complaints by placing India on a ‘gold-exchange’ standard, which pegged the rupee to the pound (Green 1988: 606).

A final potentially destabilizing force in the Victorian economy was credit, which destabilized the meaning as well as the supply of money. The most visible form of credit, and the most widely blamed in times of crisis, was the bank note. Up to 1825 in England, the Bank of England shared its right to issue notes with small firms limited to six or fewer partners. After a commercial crisis wiped out most of these, Parliament legalized English joint-stock banks, which circulated bank notes in the form of short-term loans. In exchange for these, they accepted (or ‘discounted’) bills of exchange – promissory notes backed by goods that merchants hoped to sell. By the middle of the century, ‘discount houses’ emerged to guarantee repayment of these bills, which worked well as long as the bill brokers made good on this promise. The largest of these, Overend, Gurney, controlled more than half of this business when it failed in 1866, bringing much of the money market down with it (Poovey 2002: 8–12).

Most economists had argued in the 1810s that restoring Britain to the gold standard would be sufficient to prevent such financial crises. When two successive speculative bubbles proved them wrong (first in 1825, then in 1837), they accused the Bank – and, in the latter crash, the new joint-stock banks – of excessive note issue. Those who held this view came to be known as the ‘Currency School’; they generally opposed rapid economic growth and what they saw as its attendant moral depravity. The ‘Banking School’, mainly comprised of Bank of England directors, reimagined the Bank’s role as that of using its prime lending rate to control the overall supply of credit; alone among early-Victorian monetary theorists, they presciently expanded their definition of money to include bills, checks, and bank deposits. A final ‘free banking’ school, representing the new joint-stock banking interest, argued that open competition among all note-issuing banks (as opposed to relying on an imperious Bank of England), would ensure steady, crisis-free growth (Alborn 1998a: 70–74).

The Currency School won the battle in the early 1840s, convincing Parliament to restrict the Bank’s note issues in 1844 to £14 million beyond its bullion reserves. They lost the war to the Banking School, both in the short and longer terms. In the short term, the main result of the 1844 law was to force creditors to find other

means of lending money than Bank of England paper – which they did with a vengeance, feeding a frenzied stock market that was glutted with projected railways. This led to a boom and bust in short order between 1844 and 1847, followed by another crash ten years later that mainly centred on American bills of exchange. By the time Overend, Gurney crashed in 1866, a new consensus on central banking policy was fast emerging, joining financial journalists, Bank of England directors, and joint-stock bank managers (Alborn 1998a: 74–79). Thereafter, the Bank prevented any major financial panics in Britain for the rest of the century – assisted in no small measure by joint-stock banks. Its most anxious moment came when Baring Bros., a major foreign lender, approached insolvency after making imprudent loans to Argentina. Pledges of £15m from London banks enabled a Bank of England bailout – the ultimate cost of which was outsourced to Argentine taxpayers (Alborn 1998a: 155–58).

Among other things, the Barings episode revealed that the cash nexus had become a global nexus by the end of the nineteenth century, linking Victorians with the world whether they liked it or not. Voluntary associations and the post office circulated money among working people and channelled their savings into colonial and foreign bonds. While life insurance companies waited for their customers to die, they used their monthly premium payments to finance high farming, urban renewal, and colonization. Meanwhile, banking congealed into a London-based triangle, with a few huge joint-stock banks in one corner, a few merchant banks in another, and the Bank of England at the apex. By 1900 the provincial banks Barclays, Midland and Lloyds had moved to the metropolis, joining two giant London banks that would later become NatWest; these ‘Big Five’ stocked their boards with prominent national politicians, who presided over branch networks that extended to thousands of towns and villages. Much of the capital they collected found its way abroad through private investment houses such as Grenfells, Rothschilds, and Barings, forging ties between the British population and the rest of the world that were both sturdy and nearly impossible to discern (Alborn 1998a: 146–47).

Discernment, when it came, tended to be refracted through moral sentiments and symbols. Hence in 1888, anticipating the need to replenish Britain’s supply of sovereigns, George Goschen entered into negotiations with Queen Victoria over the inscriptions to be etched on the new coins. Victoria, who was uneasy about her role as leader of the Anglican Church, and was newly enthusiastic about her imperial dominion, asked Goschen to replace ‘D.F.’ (Defender of the Faith) with ‘Imp.’ (Empress). Goschen demurred, pointing out that the latter was illegal under the Royal Titles Act. They ended up striking a compromise: D.F. remained, alongside ‘Ind. Imp.’ (Empress of India) (Alborn 1998b: 275–76). For the first time, this quarter-ounce of metal explicitly reminded Victorians of their location at the centre of a far-flung empire, while it continued to urge them to uphold a simultaneous faith in God and gold. The money that taught these lessons played a major role in supporting their institutional supports. By underpinning the terms of colonial trade, the pound sterling was as effective as its navy in reinforcing the sinews of empire. By forcing moralists to admit to virtuous uses as well as vicious abuses of wealth, Victorian money secured its status as a measure of worth.

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NOTES

- 1 Victorians who posed this question included Taylor 1844; Alison 1856, II: 380–401; Price 1861; Grenfell 1881.
- 2 See, e.g., Anon. 1844: 82; Anon. 1872; Buxton 1882: 201.
- 3 The author borrowed this incident from a real-life subscription raised for Hudson in 1845, and borrowed his outrage from Thomas Carlyle’s essay ‘Hudson’s Statue’ (1850): see Carlisle 1901: 254–92.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CULTURES OF COMMODITIES, CULTURES OF THINGS



Elaine Freedgood

In Christina Rossetti's poem, 'Goblin Market', ghostly fruit vendors advertise their wares with rhymed shouts: 'Figs to fill your mouth, /Citrons from the South/Sweet to tongue and sound to eye; /Come buy, come buy.' Such invitations were not peculiar to poetry, or to goblins, in the Victorian period. Costermongers had cried their wares with such enticements since the early sixteenth century, and in the nineteenth century they were selling everything from mackerel, watercress, and hazelnuts, to nutmeg graters, songs, and china ornaments. In a letter to the *Musical Times* in 1877, several costermonger cries are given their musical due, and transcribed as 'charming' songs (Rogers 1887: 369). By 1900, a law was passed forbidding the crying of wares: costermongers still walked the streets and roads vending their wares, but they had to do so silently. But in the Victorian period, their cries were still a part of the national soundscape, pleasing to some, noxious to others, and in Rossetti's poem, dangerously seductive.

Two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, hear the goblin's cries. Laura is seduced by them and eats their fruit; she becomes addicted to it and begins to waste away. Lizzie saves her from the market by braving it without succumbing to its temptations. These two kinds of consumers – the irrationally desiring and the rationally abstemious – suggest the ends of a continuum along which various Victorians found themselves, and around which various debates swirled throughout the century. What was reasonable expenditure? When was thrift a virtue? When, and for what reasons, was it necessary to spend, and sometimes lavishly, on clothing, furnishings, and appearance in general?

Costermongers often bought their goods from large markets, another centuries-old form of selling. *Knight's Cyclopaedia of London, 1851* describes the many markets still active in Victorian London, including most notoriously Smithfield Market, which started in 1150 as an informal gathering place to sell livestock. Knight describes cattle and sheep being driven into central London all through Sunday night for the market on Monday morning: 'The lowing of the oxen, the tremulous cries of the sheep, the barking of the dogs, the rattling of sticks on the heads and bodies of the animals, the shouts of the drovers, the flashing about of torches present together a wild and terrific combination' (Knight 1851: 797).

He goes on to explain that the ‘inconvenience’ of such a market in the middle of the city continues to be tolerated because all the surrounding businesses – taverns, tea shops, and so on – depend upon it for their survival. Other markets nearly as ancient as Smithfield continued to thrive in this period: Leadenhall market specialized in poultry, game, butter, and eggs, and Covent Garden, which sold mostly vegetables, fruit and flowers. Like Smithfield, the influx of goods into these twice- or thrice-weekly markets transformed the streets around them.

Another early form of shop, the bazaar, was a congeries of shops or stalls under one roof, operated for either profit or charity, selling goods like millinery, lace, gloves, and toys. The word derives from the Persian word ‘bazar’ according to the *OED*, and was imagined by Europeans to be an Oriental institution. Interestingly, in the examples given by the *OED*, the word ‘bazaar’ does not describe any retail project in Britain until the nineteenth century. Liberty’s of London started out as a bazaar – Liberty’s East India House – and was devoted, Krista Lysack argues, ‘to a commodified vision of the East’, because it retailed a range of Asian goods as ‘safe’ for British consumption (Lysack 2005: 146). Suzanne Daly argues that the Indian shawl, an especially popular item at Liberty’s, is both ‘exotic’ in nineteenth-century Britain, and a ‘marker of proper Englishness’. Thus in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*, a stereotypically alcoholic Irish washerwoman can get a job as a governess in a respectable Belgian home on the basis of her Indian shawl, which marks her as an English gentlewoman, down on her luck (Daly 2002: 238).

Indian shawls suggest the mutability of the commodity form. For a long time, they came to Britain via the British East India Company, which had the monopoly on shipping them, or they were brought back by colonial civil servants from the Asian subcontinent and given as gifts to mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. The shawls were so valuable that they became heirlooms (and they were fortunately fashionable from roughly 1780–1880). As heirlooms they were not permanently removed from commodity circulation however: they could readily re-enter exchange because even second-hand Indian shawls commanded a good price, and age often added to their value.

The display of Asian and other imperially derived goods was a central feature of the Great Exhibition of 1851, in which there were 14,000 displays and demonstrations: of Indian muslin and chintz, Australian wool, West African calabashes, as well as British goods divided into categories including ‘Woollen and Worsted’, ‘Philosophical, Musical, Horological, and Surgical Instruments’, and exhibits from Belgium, China, France, and so on. For many contemporary critics, the Crystal Palace Exhibition, as it was also known, is thought of as generating distinctly Victorian retail practices: ‘Like a prototypical department store, it placed [things] in a climate-controlled landscape, it flooded them with light, it isolated them in departments, it channeled people through them, and it turned them into the focal points of aesthetic and linguistic contemplation’ (Richards 1990: 30–31). The effect of such spectacles is perhaps a recursive one, in which shop windows affected the Exhibition, which in turn affected store display and marketing. The relationship between retail and museum display practices was at once distinct and intimately related, in what Tony Bennett describes as the ‘exhibitionary complex’: ‘the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had primarily been displayed (but to a restricted public) into a progressively

more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting messages of power . . . throughout society' (Bennett 1995: 60–61).

These messages were not always clear, however. The Great Exhibition, because of the enormous range and global provenance of its products, engendered what Isobel Armstrong has described as an 'anxiety of taxonomy' (Armstrong 2008: 132). Various catalogues of the Exhibition were lampooned for their inability to bring classificatory order to the myriad things on display, and the Exhibition itself was variously described and satirized as an Exhibition of Idleness, a Glass Hive, a Temple of Peace, and a spectacle for the gratification of the people (Armstrong 2008: 202). This divided opinion suggests both the variety of commodity cultures in the period, and the anxiety over what should be displayed and consumed and how.

Tellingly, the Exhibition did become a museum rather than an emporium – first as the South Kensington and today as the Victoria and Albert Museum, and this style of museum set off debates about the proper form or forms of museum display. In 1866, the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* noted the influence of the Crystal Palace on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: 'it may be said to owe its origin to that prolific mother, the Great Exhibition of 1851 . . . It is however, more of a school than a show. It is meant not merely to please but to instruct; not less to charm the eye than to enrich the mind' (quoted in Yanni 2005: 93). The Edinburgh Museum, however, was not shy about its connection to the 'show' of the Great Exhibition, since the purpose of the museum was to display both raw materials that might become commodities, and commodities made from raw materials. The knowledge on display was industrial knowledge.

A squeamishness is just beginning to develop in this period about displaying commodities as objects of knowledge: a division is beginning to occur between art and commerce; science and commerce; knowledge and commerce. In other words, the world of the market – the grotesque and dangerous market in some imaginations – is increasingly cordoned off from other kinds of cultural activities. Or that is the hope of some museums, in which the link between school and show is decidedly effaced. The Victorian architect Robert Kerr defended his design for London's Natural History Museum by contrasting 'gallery' and 'bazaar'. His project, he claimed, 'presents the *Gallery* principle, as opposed to the *Bazaar* principle so much favored of later years. A vast Bazaar, like the Crystal Palace . . . however suitable for other purposes, is not adapted for those of a Natural History Collection; – specimens lose scale and importance, the casual visitor is bewildered . . . and the display sinks from the character of science to that of show' (quoted in Yanni 2005: 123). Commercial pursuits are cast in opposition to the pursuit of knowledge. This is not a necessary opposition, and is perhaps inevitable in a culture in which 'the market' is imagined as that which one engages voluntarily and periodically.

It perhaps makes particular sense that museum display is differentiating itself from commercial display at a moment when something of a 'retail revolution' is taking place. In this 'revolution', much debated by historians as to its speed and extent, there is a general tendency toward fixed stores with fixed prices – rather than the irregular practices of costermongering, fairs, and markets. Nonetheless, 'in the same way that shop development was stimulated by the concentration of

population and purchasing power in towns and cities so too was the growth of markets and itinerant retailers' (Shaw and Wild 1979: 280). In the Victorian period, as in our own, consumers participated in shopping styles from many previous centuries, even as they experienced the changes introduced by price tags, more specialized shops, multiples (or chain stores), cooperatives run by working-class communities, and most spectacularly, the development of the department store.

The particularly Victorian innovations in consumption include the results of massive industrial innovation and imperial expansion. These twin engines of development meant that there were more things and more kinds of things to buy – cocoa, rice, baby food, bicycles, sewing machines – and at lower prices. An increase in real income for much of the population in the second half of the nineteenth century meant that people had more money to spend on goods, and increasingly, on leisure services.

This increased income, however, was always subject to sudden reversals: market downturns, illness, the death of a spouse. The middle classes as a group 'were enormously powerful but as individuals weak and vulnerable' (Morris 2005: 343). For the poor, downturns in the economy could mean the difference between routine hunger and acute starvation. The coming of a truly mass market does not occur until the 1870s, when working-class consumers can finally afford to buy more than household necessities and the 'noxious luxuries of tobacco and drink' (Price 1999: 34).

The first moment in what is obviously a very gradual retailing revolution is 'the slow decline of self-sufficiency' in which very gradually people gave up some of their baking, the making of their own clothes, the keeping of livestock, 'and began to buy these staples' (Winstanley 1983: 4). After 1850 the steam ship improves the transport of raw materials and finished products; the price of steel drops and ships can radically increase their tonnage, although as James Belich points out in what is a common pattern of technological innovation '[o]ld technologies merged with new to improve sailing. . . . Wind was free power, and it competed with steam on the world's sea-lanes for a surprisingly long time' (Belich 2009: 210–11). Better rail transport, and motor vehicles, improved the circulation of goods and customers.

All of this gave an impetus to the development of large-scale manufacturing of consumer goods relying on savings from economies of scale . . . The position of the producer/retailer was . . . threatened as the separation of production from distribution accelerated, the length of the chain of supply increased by the inclusion of middlemen in it.

(Winstanley 1983: 33)

This is the beginning of commodity culture, in which both workers and consumers are separated from the social relations of production – that is to say from each other, and the relation they have to one another through the commodity.

In the liberal view of it, commodity production and the culture it produces improves the standard of living of many of the people living in it by providing more goods at lower prices. Machinery lightens labour. More goods provide choice; consumption involves creativity. In the Marxist view of commodity culture, more mass-produced goods produce alienation. People are alienated from their labour because they work at repetitive tasks, at machines they do not own, at a pace they cannot set, for wages that leave them impoverished. The products of their labour are then relayed through various middle men and women to consumers they never

meet. In this way labour is as commodified as is its product; relations between things govern relations between people. Indeed, from the Marxist point of view, in industrial capitalism commodification is ubiquitous: everything – people, parts of them, labour, objects, relationships – is fungible and has, eventually, a price tag that makes them comparable to one another in monetary terms. The idea of money value becomes increasingly – absurdly and fantastically, for Marx – naturalized. This is why the commodity is for him a fetish: it becomes invested with a value that is not inherent in it, then that value becomes an object of a near-religious belief: there is a spirit in commodities – the spirit of their exchange value.

In the Victorian period, there was a conservative critique of commodification, led by writers like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Charles Dickens. These writers bewail the loss of imagination and creativity that mass-production entails. Carlyle enjoined his readers to try to behold a voice crying out from ‘the dumb bosom of nature’ ‘that supply and demand is not the one Law of Nature; Cash-payment is not the sole nexus of man with man – how far from it!’ (Carlyle 1965: 187). Ruskin argues that ‘[i]n order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: they must be fit for it; they must not do too much of it; and they must have a sense of success in it’ (Ruskin 1886: 312). Eighteen-hour workdays in mills and factories producing goods in which workers cannot have a chance to feel ‘success’ is clearly not what Ruskin has in mind.

These writers similarly attack the mindless forms of consumption that such mindless production seems to require: Ruskin asks that we see the ‘perfectnesses’ (Ruskin 1919: 223) of machine production as a sign of slavery, since the mark of the imperfect is the mark of the human hand, and therefore the human being whose mind and body are engaged in production. Dickens seems to revel in the world of goods: his very detailed descriptions suggest his interest in the commodities around him. But he also lampoons and often punishes characters who are too interested in money: they must often learn the hard way that love, which is always the opposite of wealth, is more important than money. Bella Wilfer of *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel about ‘money, money, money and what money can make of life’, must be willing to marry John Rokesmith, a poor clerk, who then reveals himself to be John Harmon, who could have been a wealthy gentleman, had he claimed his inheritance. But if he had, Bella could not have been redeemed from her mercenary preoccupations with wealth. All ends well, when the Boffins, a poor couple to whom John Harmon has given his inheritance, in turn make John and Bella their heirs. In order to get rich in the world of the Dickens novel, you first must give up the idea that money is really valuable; human values must be definitively separated from market values.

William Morris led the socialist utopian critique of capitalist culture. He also believed that work should be an expression of creativity to the greatest extent possible, and that people should consume fewer but better things. This belief even extended to the world of print: he was convinced that the physical matter of a book was not negligible, and that the beauty and quality of everything from typeface to binding affected the beauty and quality of the reading experience (Miller 2008: 477–502). His own Kelmscott Press produced books of extraordinary quality – Morris designed typefaces, made his own paper, and printed his books by hand.

Oscar Wilde has also been read as a utopian socialist, not only because of his essay ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’, which is not always read as straight-faced political theory, but because of the very form of his work. Carolyn Lesjak argues that

[i]n order to carve out the realm of freedom from the realm of necessity, Wilde needs to attack the bourgeois forms that reduce needs to mere utility and reduce the objects that meet those needs to mere commodities; he needs to denaturalize and defamiliarize them, in order that they may be reappropriated in all their richness and variety.

Lesjak goes on to analyze the epigrams of Wilde as ‘weapons of estrangement’ (Lesjak 2006: 191). Wilde famously declared that all art is useless, for example, and uselessness would seem to be the opposite of the commodious commodity. Artists produce, ideally, no recognizable value. Wilde’s attempted renovations of cultural mores inevitably involved making new choices in consumption: investing in the useless is Wilde’s strike against the commodity, but it can also be interpreted as a strike for commodity production and consumer culture – much of which is useless, or only very ephemerally useful.

Industrial culture had a great deal of support, however, from a host of writers, many of whom we no longer read: once their system triumphed, their literature languished. Writers like Andrew Ure and Edward Baines, who celebrated the factory system, draw on ‘images of organic development to portray the factory system not only as a natural consequence of social progress but also as a stimulus to national culture’ (Bizup 2003: 25). G. R. Porter, an enthusiastic supporter of industry, in *Progress of the Nation*, describes the ‘progress’ of the nation in terms of the goods available for furnishing the middle-class interior:

We now see, not carpets merely, but many articles of furniture which were formerly in use only among the nobility and gentry: the walls are covered by paintings and engravings, and apartments contain evidences that some among the inmates cultivate one or more of those elegant accomplishments which tend so delightfully to refine the minds of individuals, and to sweeten the intercourse of families.

(Porter 1851: 522)

From the 1830s, household inventories reveal that the middle class began to routinely buy sofas, sideboards, board games, and musical instruments – this last perhaps the source of the ‘elegant accomplishments’ to which Porter refers.

Victorian domestic space, like the exhibition and the museum, was an important arena for display. And accomplishing the right kind of display was no mean feat: Isabella Beeton, in her *Book of Household Management* (1861), compares the ‘mistress of the house’ to ‘the commander of an army, or the leader of any enterprise’. She was responsible for making her home cozy, handsome, clean, and for providing delicious meals and polite, healthy children – all of this in a thrifty and efficient manner. The parlour was the critical public room of the house and a vast array of objects were available for its decoration. Thad Logan points out that it ‘contained an eclectic mix of oddly assorted items’, and she describes them as ‘the functional, the ornamental and the mixed’. Among the functional items one

routinely finds lamps, clocks, and mirrors. The ornamental objects include figurines, stuffed animals, shells, and the many decorative handicrafts made by women and girls in the period, like fish-scale collages, embroidered runners, and so on. The mixed items: games, books, and of course, antimacassars. She also lists the varied materials found in the parlour, to which I have added their provenance: Italian majolica, Chinese porcelain, American and Australian zinc, Indian muslin, Caribbean mahogany, Asian teak, African ivory, and Malaysian gutta percha jumbled together with English alabaster, jet, iron, pine, and oak. As much as the parlour was a domestic space in which the exotic was tamed, it was also a space in which the foreign was insinuated into the domestic realm (Logan 2001: 108, 110, 112, 187). There is a two-way negotiation in the bazaar of the parlour in which objects are consumed and are in some sense consuming: of money, clearly, and of attention; there was a need to put these varied things in their proper places – spatially, ideologically, and affectively. Various household guides and magazines attempt to aid the homemaker in this fraught project, adding another layer of products to consume – guides to consumption. The taxonomic panic that the Great Exhibition engendered is replayed and resolved in the domestic sphere – on a case-by-case basis, we might say, with each family coming to grips with, and domesticating, the spoils of empire in their own particular homes.

The activity of consuming became constructed as increasingly dangerous during the nineteenth century, and not only because of the dangers of the exotic and the problem of foreign material penetrating and possibly disrupting the domestic interior – as we can see, the domestic interior was constitutively foreign. As we saw in ‘Goblin Market’, the consumer was increasingly imagined as becoming a victim of various kinds of seduction. An illness of shopping – kleptomania – is defined, in which the middle-class woman is imagined as essentially driven mad by retail processes that make her act irrationally (see Stekel 1924 and Whitlock 2005). From the 1840s, increasingly elaborate forms of advertising, and other kinds of marketing – like royal endorsement, promises of ‘purity’, the imprimatur of ‘science’, for example – lure, hector, and insist on the quality, necessity, and desirability of various objects. The goblin market has diversified its techniques. Before the mid-century, advertisements were small printed lists in the back pages of periodicals. ‘By 1880 advertisements employed stunning illustrations . . . Text was inventively persuasive, even sensational, no longer bound by the tiresome printing conventions that dictated justified columns and uniform type’ (Loeb 1994: 7). Advertisements were not limited to the periodical press; they appeared on the sides of omnibuses, on paper bags, on pictorial calendars, on the boards worn by sandwichmen walking city streets.

If historians debate a retailing revolution, eyewitnesses in the mid-nineteenth century did not. An unsigned article, ‘Shop windows’, from 1855, declares:

The discovery that the more a tradesman could exhibit, the more he could sell, seems to have been made by the present race of salesman. This discovery, in connexion with the rise and spread of the plate-glass manufacture, has wrought a grand revolution in the shop-world – a revolution which has affected our street architecture . . . and made the front wall of our ground floors a wall of crystal from which the wealth of the world looks out upon the public.

(‘Shop windows’ 1855: 668)

Objects are personified inhabitants of windows that look out on shoppers, perhaps inhabiting the powerful position in the subject/object relationship. Shop windows were declared to have a cultural value of their own. The novelist Margaret Oliphant noted: 'As a mere sight, the shop windows are often more attractive, and certainly more amusing, than many of the museums which it is supposed to be for the benefit of our minds to visit' (Oliphant 1873: 223). The great stores became a destination; simply window shopping became a popular activity: 'the shop windows of London', an article in *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* declares as early as 1853, 'have long formed the city's principal attraction to strangers and visitors' (*Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, 15 October 1853: 252). Looking at things behind or under glass is still one kind of activity: whether the object of one's attention is a shop window or museum exhibit, the common denominator is glass.

The glass window acts as both medium and barrier: 'The commercialized window offers public access to spectacle and display and a fantasmatic ownership of its contents. An answering withdrawal to individual ownership of the window space from the inside is the dominant rhythm of the century' (Armstrong 2008: 7). Looking in and looking out provide experiences of fantasised ownership because of a barrier that is almost transparent, but still solid and protective. Or, they provide for a kind of play: imagining or playing with things inside or outside of windows because of the safety the barrier provides. You won't fall in or out; it is safe to gaze and dream without having to provide your own barriers or boundaries. Plate glass allows for an experience of viewership without commitment. The shop window becomes a gallery display, a museum exhibit, the illustration of a tale the viewer can spin.

If we see in the periodical press a distinct historical consciousness of the changes wrought in the shopping experience and in the architecture of the city by plate glass windows, we can also find a kind of nostalgia for practices and kinds of stores that are quickly becoming quaint. In 1860, 'The Village Shop' eulogizes that place to city dwellers as the remotest of institutions: 'In multitudes of pleasant little places . . . the grand business of shopping has to be transacted under one roof', the writer informs us. The article then goes on to list, with the gusto typical of this typical kind of list (not unlike a shopping list), the enormous variety of items and services the village shop provides: Manchester and Paisley (geographical metonyms for cotton and wool), oils, pickles, wax-lights, household furniture, a lending library of 300–400 books, a complete pharmacy and medical advice from the shopkeeper on site, letter-writing by the shop-keeper's daughter, cutlery, wallpaper, lobster traps. I only list part of the list, and the author only lists part of the inventory of the shop. In a satirical article in Charles Dickens's magazine *Household Words*, we get a similar list of the contents of 'Jack's Everything Shop': 'a confused mass of red herrings, variegated ribbons, story-books, glazed calico, arrowroot, Everton toffee . . . beaver hats, butter and cheese, tracts, York hams, Irish poplins, band boxes, fiddle-strings, . . . and pickled anchovies'. We see from the more sober list above that the *Household Words* writer is perhaps only satirical through rearrangement rather than through any invention or exaggeration.

What we might also discern from these charming, bemused accounts of the general or 'everything' store is that ideas of specialization are making the cheek-by-jowl variety of such emporia seem silly and old-fashioned. Goods and services

are being newly compartmentalized, labelled, and cordoned off from one another by departments, by experts, by shops that sell only one kind of product. The London shopper wants ham from a butcher and drugs from a chemist presumably; the acceptable ‘everything’ store will be a department store with goods appropriately arranged.

Historian of shopping Alison Adburgham calls it a ‘strange irony’ that Bon Marché of Paris has the reputation of being the world’s first department store. While that emporium took off in the 1850s, in Britain the department store is well on its way in the 1830s. In Manchester there is Kendal Milne, which began as a bazaar, and had the then innovative rule that ‘Prices shall be marked on all the goods, from which no abatement shall be made’ (quoted in Adburgham 1981: 138). In other words, no haggling or bargaining. Department stores also demanded cash payment, unlike small local stores that frequently extended extensive credit. Bainbridge’s of Newcastle, by 1845, had a wide variety of stock including dress and furnishing fabrics, fashion accessories, furs, and ready-to-wear clothes. By 1870 Debenham and Freebody’s in London had 27 departments, including parasols, lace, ball dresses, ribbons, haberdashery, and millinery.

The sectioning off of different goods from one another means that butter and beaver hats will not be found on the same shelf anymore, or even in the same room. Department stores create categories and organize the world of goods into kinship groups: they tell us what belongs together and what commodities ought not to rub shoulders with one another. Such taxonomic impulses are widespread in Victorian culture: anthropology and ethnography have their beginnings in this period, as do other social sciences, including criminology, in which classifications, types, races, groups, and subgroups become central to the project of producing knowledge. Such knowledge creates a sense of empirical dominion over the things of the world, a large chunk of which was under the control of the British Empire by the end of the century. The enthusiasm for categorizing people and things suggests both an anxiety and an aspiration; it also becomes a way of understanding the world. Even in the department store, commodities are subject to gendered and racialized hierarchies: women’s and men’s clothes are separated, the India outfit is its own department, and the exotic and domestic, the feminine and the masculine become commodified as qualities with exchange value.

In a strange convergence of feminism and misogyny, of the age-old stereotype of women as the shoppers-in-chief of nearly every historical period, and feminist historians as the main investigators of shopping, women have indeed been the focus of historical inquiries on the topic. Initially, women were seen as oppressed by their domestic duties, and shopping was seen as part of the burden of housekeeping: ‘the female character and that of the home became one and the same as she translated her husband’s income into the objects and personnel comprising his household’ (Armstrong 1987: 83). More recently, the focus has been on shopping as an experience of agency and creativity in the public sphere: ‘Shopping meant a day “in town”, consuming space and time *outside* of the private home. A shopper might have lunch out, take a break for tea, visit a club, museum or the theater’ (Rappaport 2000: 5). Urban space is transformed in the nineteenth century, making it available for transient public use through the provision of clubs, restaurants, museums, theatres, and of course, myriad shops. All of these institutions provide various kinds



Figure 12.1 ‘The Toy Shop’ by T. B. Kennington from the *Royal Academy Pictures* July 1891, p. 80

of resting places, including actual ‘resting places’, a Victorian euphemism for a toilet. Indeed, the issue of public resting places became a cause: in 1879 the *Women’s Gazette* ‘joined forces with the Ladies Sanitary Association to induce London’s vestries to build public lavatories for ladies’ (Rappaport 2000: 82).

Men were increasingly targeted in the nineteenth century as consumers, and

the old equation of women as consumers and men as producers was shifted to one in which women were bad consumers and men were good consumers. Men had to rise out from under the tyranny of their wives’ irrational, directionless, and ever-deviant shopping practices and assent to a kind of consumption that was logical, focused, and masculine.

(Shannon 2004: 9)

New kinds of clothing and accessories were marketed in a new discourse of male fashion and masculinity: Cadbury’s cocoa is associated with manliness, Bovril – ‘liquid life’ – is associated with heroism on the battlefield. That men had always been consumers is curiously obscured in these advertising campaigns: it is as if it is safe for men to shop for the very first time.

A certain idea of childhood is invented in the Victorian period: children were no longer simply short adults who worked alongside their elders on the farm or in the forge; they became creatures who needed to develop through play. Lisa Hermine Makman argues that

[a]t the end of the eighteenth century, a ‘toy’ was a trifling thing. The word often referred to a diminutive but accurate copy of an object. . . . In the nineteenth century, as ‘toy’ came more frequently to denote a child’s plaything, children themselves became toy-like, at least in the eyes of adults, who saw them increasingly as precious objects.

(Makman 1999: 119)

These precious objects, fortunately, could be entertained with less than precious objects. Rocking horses and doll houses – formerly available only to the very affluent – became partly or fully mass-produced; after 1846 the process for producing marbles was partly automated and they in turn also became far less expensive; toy soldiers were made in hollow rather than solid molds, making them cheaper to produce and ship. Toys helped children to play at the moment at which the working child is no longer normative.

This upsurge in retail activity represents the ‘breakdown of the old status order’ and the advent of a culture based on ‘access to goods regulated solely by money-wealth rather than by religious prohibitions of luxury and excess’ (Slater 1997: 22). In a sermon on ‘The Moral Significance of the Crystal Palace’, Reverend Henry Whitney Bellows redefines a Christian relationship to luxury as that which

is debilitating and demoralizing only when it is exclusive; the indulgence of a class, the exception and not the rule. In that case it is coupled with idleness, pride, and oppression. The peculiarity of the luxury of our time, and especially of our country, is its diffusive nature; it is the opportunity and the aim of large masses of our people; and this happily unites it with industry, equality and justice.

Thrift as a value, and a critical virtue, still had powerful adherents. Mrs Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* emphasizes it as a crucial quality of domestic success, and middle-class women organized themselves to teach poor and working-class women how to run thrifty, comfortable homes and buy healthy and tasty meals with pennies (Davin 1996: 149–53). The idea that luxury is widely accepted is more of an attempt, on the part of writers like Bellows, to widely diffuse it, than an accomplished fact of the period just after the Crystal Palace.

The middle class is a ‘large mass’ in the nineteenth century, but an even larger mass, the labouring class, was of course shut out from this not quite ‘diffusive’ luxury. The catalogue of the Barton family’s parlour in Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel *Mary Barton* of 1848 suggests that luxury had not diffused itself everywhere:

The room was tolerably large and possessed many conveniences. On the right of the door, as you entered, was a longish window, with a broad ledge. On each side of this hung blue-and-white check curtains, which were now drawn, to shut in the friends met to enjoy themselves . . . In the corner between the

window and the fire-side was a cupboard, apparently full of plates and dishes, cups and saucers, and some more non-descript articles, for which one would have fancied their possessors could not use – such as triangular pieces of glass to save carving knives and forks from dirtying table-cloths.

(Gaskell 2000: 45)

Gaskell encourages her middle-class readers to see that the labouring class also enjoys the doo-dads of domesticity. The desire for decoration extends to re-functioning broken glass as a ‘rest’ for knives and forks. This desire is at once poignant and pathetic: knowing how and what to consume are a kind of cultural capital – a set of skills and an acquisition of taste that takes membership in the right social class to acquire.

This poor were not fully served by the kind of formal shops that served the middle class until very late in the nineteenth century; they still relied on hawkers and tally men: itinerant salespeople, the latter of which sold goods on time. There was also the pawn shop, a source of survival for many, a kind of insurance for perhaps most of the poor. Indeed some of the articles in the Barton parlour might have been purchased specifically with an eye to their potential future value as pledges: ‘When buying sales goods the poor habitually asked what they would fetch if offered in pawn, and frequently confessed they were influenced in their choice by the articles’ potential pledge value’. (Tebbutt 1983: 16). In *Mary Barton*, John Barton, Mary’s father, does indeed pawn a silk handkerchief to feed the starving family of a co-worker. Eventually most of the small luxuries of the Barton house are pawned, and like John Barton himself, they are beyond redemption.

Did the commodity entirely colonize Victorian culture? In the influential argument of Thomas Richards, the period experienced a ‘new dominion of things’ and the ‘material world became a vehicle for occult forces which were thought to stand outside it’ (Richards 1990: 73, 82). Commodities thoroughly and finally colonize culture in this argument, and people are more or less powerless in the face of the spectacle produced by the reign of capital: advertising, marketing, and display animate objects and objectify subjects. Richards finds Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* particularly pertinent for understanding this moment of Victorian culture. ‘The spectacle’, Debord writes, ‘corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life’ (Debord 1995: 29). In this complete colonization the commodity is ‘*all* that there is to see’. We think only about the money value of goods, but not about what Marx calls in *Capital*, ‘the social relations of production’. If we consider the accounts of shop windows, we can use them as evidence both for and against this account of Victorian commodity culture: on the one hand, spectacle does seem to triumph, as everyone seems engaged in looking at things through a newly possible mass technology of display. On the other hand, glass and display are the subject of much discussion, and the activities they make possible are understood as both historical and disruptive. Can the commodity completely colonize a culture, triumphantly displacing all other kinds of relations between subjects and objects?

A slightly less emphatic view of commodity culture suggests itself in the self-consciousness of a hugely influential group of writers – novelists. Andrew Miller, in *Novels behind Glass*, reads Victorian fiction as both critical of and compromised

by the plethora of things flooding its ambient culture: Victorian novelists, he argues, suffered ‘a penetrating anxiety that their social world was being reduced to a warehouse of goods and commodities’ (Miller 2004: 7). For Miller, ‘the Victorian novel provides us with the most graphic and enduring images of the power of commodities to affect the varied activities and attitudes of individual and social experience’ (Miller 2004: 7). In George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, the narrator teaches us how and how much to value the material world, specifically addressing female characters’ relationships to their clothing. Miller explains two powerful trends in mid-Victorian dress: haute couture and mass production:

Charles Worth’s great success, the continuing importance of widely circulated fashion news and plates, and the increasing use of paper patterns made fashionable clothing more broadly influential. The invention of the sewing machine and the development of large retail stores selling goods to be shipped throughout the Empire and making their money on quick sales, large volume, and a small margin of profit, indicated an increasing flattening of fashion distinctions.

(Miller 2004: 193)

Consequently, it is becoming more and more difficult to be sure about a person’s social rank from their clothing alone, or, only a very astute reading of clothing will reliably reveal that rank. Eliot defines various female characters in the novel according to their relationship to clothing: Dorothea Brooke, the novel’s heroine, chooses plain clothing and is not very interested in ornaments (except when she admires – and decides to keep – her dead mother’s emeralds!), her sister Cecilia is also not a flamboyant dresser, but more interested in ornament than is her sister. Finally Rosamund Vincey, the daughter of a rich manufacturer, is much too interested in, and seduced by, the world of commodities (as is her husband to be), and they are eventually financially ruined by their overspending. In ‘reading’ the various, and often complex, relationships of these women to their clothing and how it affects their sense of themselves, our judgements of them, and other characters’ ideas of who they are, we understand the conflicts in the object relations of the moment, and it is precisely this conflict, Miller argues, that keeps ‘material culture . . . in the center of [Eliot’s] aesthetic’ (Miller 2004: 218). It is also at the centre of her ethical and political projects in *Middlemarch*, which aim to enlarge our sympathies with people in general, but to direct our ambitions for change to the small circle of humans we find in our very immediate vicinity. The difficulty of reading people, for the average reader of *Middlemarch*, ensures that we must leave large political projects to greater observers than we can hope to be.

In my own previous work, I have wondered about ‘the ideas in things’ in the Victorian novel, and the extent to which things had more meaning for their Victorian readers than they may have for us now (Freedgood 2006). There is a vast Victorian literature of ‘the social relations of production’ for which there is no analogue in the present, and that means, I think, that many nineteenth-century Britons actually knew more about the making of things than we know now. Factory tourism, autobiographies of manufactured things like umbrellas and dolls, pedagogical stories about coal mining and iron forging, parliamentary reports exploring the need for factory reform, Edwin Chadwick’s surprisingly popular



Figure 12.2 Drawing of goods departing France for the Great Exhibition (stacks of boxes marked 'Londres') in *Illustrated London News*, 8 March 1851 p. 198

Sanitary Report on the Labouring Population of Great Britain, which detailed the living conditions of factory workers minutely and massively: these kinds of texts suggest an interest in production, and the social relations of production to at least some extent.

For the entirety of 1851, for example, *The Illustrated London News* printed an article per week on an exhibit at the Crystal Palace. Such articles included an explanation of the manufacture of pins, a detailing of the various kinds of wood in the Canadian lumber exhibition, as well as fulminations on more exciting objects, like cotton spinning and weaving machinery. The Exhibition was in fact, a mix of the great and the small: the amazingly ornate birdcage and golf balls, the wax figures of Her Majesty and Prince Albert, and anchovy sauce. Although understood by many contemporary theorists as the ground zero of commodity culture, the products had no price tags and looking was not a prelude to possessing. There was more to see, even at the Crystal Palace, than commodities: the machinery of production was there and machine exhibits were among the most popular. Small tags on the items displayed often described the labour of their making: Huntley and Palmer note that their 'Sweet fancy biscuits' are made 'by steam machinery'. The exhibit of E. Hutchinson, an Oak antique armchair with carved ornaments, notes that the carved work is by E. Hutchinson, Jr, 'self-taught'. W. Bridges sends

in a ‘tapestry woolwork; worked during leisure hours’ (*Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* 1851: 144, 130, 98). I submit these various ‘exhibits’ as emblems of an interest in the social relations of production, however attenuated and on the wane.

Even the consumption of shop windows and of stories of shops might be described as evidence of a thing, as opposed to a commodity culture. To look at things without the intention of buying them might be an attempt to establish a different kind of relationship with them – a non-commodity relation, in which the object is admired, contemplated, narrativized, and its exchange and even use value is beside the point. Similarly, the lists that the periodical article about the village shop, and indeed this article about shopping, tend to proffer in happy profusion leave objects unattended by syntax, narrative, or anything more complicated than commas and semicolons. Such groups of things suggest old and new arrangements of the object world – the list is entirely malleable, and can be reshuffled at typographic will. Commodity culture can perhaps be defied, resisted, put off into the future by various social and linguistic maneuvers in which things are made interesting, specific, and incommensurable outside of use or exchange. Then, when we do consume we might do so with production in mind, thus at least attempting to consider the social relations of production that the Victorians began to lose, and which we have lost almost all interest in retrieving.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

URBANISING EXPERIENCES

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Richard Dennis

In 1831, seven million out of a total population of 16.3 million inhabitants of Great Britain (43 per cent) lived in 'towns'. By 1911, town dwellers numbered 31.8 million out of 40.9 million Britons (78 per cent). But a town could be anywhere of more than 2,500 inhabitants, so the 'urban experience' for some town dwellers was still quite limited. Restricting our attention to England and Wales and to the largest 'urban' places, just under 20 per cent of the population lived in cities of at least 100,000 inhabitants in 1831, but by 1911 that figure had increased to 44 per cent. In 1841 there were only seven places with more than 100,000 inhabitants and 48 with between 20,000 and 100,000; by 1901 there were 33 places with more than 100,000 and another 141 with at least 20,000 inhabitants (Law 1967, Waller 1983). Given increasing geographical and social mobility, we can conclude that by the end of Victoria's reign, most of the population had experience of living in big cities at some stage in their lives, and even those who remained in rural areas would have encountered city life in numerous ways: through demands that cities placed on agricultural production, the circulation of newspapers and magazines that originated in cities, the periodic 'invasion' of countryside by city dwellers seeking retreat from the pressures of urban life, but unconsciously bringing urban values with them.

So we cannot sensibly ignore cities as an essential component of the Victorian world; many of the events and activities discussed elsewhere in this book occurred in cities, and most Victorian attitudes and values were propagated by commentators (politicians, clergy, academics, novelists, artists) who lived in cities. What is critical, however, is whether cities simply *accommodated* all these activities and attitudes, or had a truly formative role in *shaping* them, whether things happened differently *because* they happened in cities (Dyos and Wolff 1973).

We should also remember all those cities outside Britain that were part of the Victorian world: Melbourne and Sydney each had half a million inhabitants by 1900, Montreal about 300,000 and Toronto 200,000; Cape Town doubled in population in the 1890s to reach about 150,000 in 1900. Among cities of the British Empire with mainly non-British inhabitants, Bombay and Calcutta were each close to a million inhabitants by 1900, Hong Kong accommodated at least

250,000 and Singapore about 200,000. There were also cities beyond the limits of empire, especially in America, that were indubitably 'Victorian'. In most of the world, however, levels of urbanisation lagged behind Britain's. Canada's population was only 37 per cent urban in 1901, while the United States' urban population increased from only 11 per cent in 1840 to 40 per cent in 1900. Only in Australia, where, even in 1891, 70 per cent of people lived in towns, and one-third in towns of at least 10,000 inhabitants, was the experience of urbanism as widespread as in Britain (Lees and Lees 2007, Powell 1988).

At the top of the urban hierarchy, nationally and imperially, London was already a city of nearly two million inhabitants in 1837, and had grown to about 6.5 million by 1901. Elsewhere in Britain, conurbations (a word first used by the planner, Patrick Geddes, in 1915) centred on Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds-Bradford each increased from around 200,000–300,000 to more than one million inhabitants. Although by the late nineteenth century most cities were growing more by natural increase than by migration, typically around a third of their inhabitants had been born elsewhere. In 1851, 38 per cent of Londoners originated outside London, including 109,000 in Ireland; but 58 per cent of Liverpoolians had been born outside Liverpool: more than 22 per cent were Irish born (Dennis 1984). By the end of the century, 120,000 Londoners were Jews, mostly fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. London also accommodated substantial communities of Germans, Italians, Chinese and other foreign nationals, and a significant black population. Compared to today's multicultural metropolises, Victorian cities might appear relatively homogeneous in the origins of their inhabitants, but diversity is relative to what you have previously experienced. So we might equate the situation of Catholic Irish with that of Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations in British cities more recently; and workers migrating from remote parts of England and Wales to Victorian London might be compared to labour migrants from Eastern and Central Europe nowadays.

Contemporaries differentiated British towns and cities according to their function. The Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840) identified six classes of town: the metropolis; manufacturing towns; seaports; watering places; county towns; and mining districts. Yet the city with the most industrial workers was London, and Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, manufacturing towns according to this classification, were predominantly commercial and service centres for smaller, more purely industrial, towns in their hinterlands. The number of truly *new* settlements was quite small, including towns built around railway junctions, mining towns in south Wales, northeast England and Scotland and, most spectacular of all, the iron-making town of Middlesbrough, which increased in population from a few hundred in 1831 to 100,000 by the early 1900s (Briggs 1968). Some suburbs, especially around London, grew sufficiently to become county boroughs in their own right. While most towns had diverse socio-economic structures and limited hinterlands, industrial towns boasted simpler occupational structures that corresponded to more confrontational class politics between employers and 'hands', exemplified in Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854). Specialist towns also recruited migrants from farther afield: towns in southern England with railway workshops (Swindon, Ashford, Wolverton) attracted workers from the

northeast and northwest; glassmakers migrated to St Helens, Lancashire, from Tyneside, Clydeside and the West Midlands.

The experience of urban life varied from place to place. Migrants who arrived alone might find themselves lost in a sea of ‘others’, liable to all the contradictions of city life discussed by urban sociologists: problems of anonymity, alienation and anomie but also freedom to construct new identities, away from constraints of family elders and community convention. Other migrants arrived as part of a group from the same place of origin, or gravitated to established networks of ‘hometown’ religious, social or cultural institutions, which either eased their transition to urban life or insulated them from outside influences. Yet others expected to be transient, temporary town dwellers, whether ‘tramping artisans’ following established circuits of trade union support enabling them to work their passage from one town to the next; or climbing the urban hierarchy from village to small town, to provincial centre, to metropolis. Numerous Victorian novels recount such migrant experiences, from Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1838) by way of Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* (1853), to George Gissing’s *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) (which traces the childhood and early adulthood of Arthur Golding from ‘Bloomford’, ‘in one of the pleasantest of the southern counties’, through a succession of jobs and addresses in central London).

However, most urban dwellers were *not* newcomers; they had been born and raised in places where they continued to live. Their experience reflected the physical and social dynamics of city life: processes of aggregation, community formation, segregation, mobility and contingency played out through differences of age, class and gender.

Early in the Victorian era, Robert Vaughan (1843) announced the ‘age of great cities’. Contrary to Vaughan’s optimism, other commentators were more inclined to see cities as ‘modern Babylons’ rather than ‘new Jerusalems’ (Girouard 1985). And by the end of the century, despite improvements in technology, sanitation, social welfare, public order and municipal government, many commentators feared processes of ‘urban degeneration’ – the great cities parasitically destroying the nation’s health, wealth and identity. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, warned of the problems in ‘Darkest London’ – drunkenness, unemployment, poverty, crime, prostitution, destitution and unbelief – but also offered ‘the way out’: within cities, the establishment of cheap food depots, labour bureaux, ‘salvation factories’, a ‘poor man’s bank’, women’s night shelters, ‘preventive homes for girls’, and a ‘poor man’s metropole’ (the Salvation Army equivalent of settlement houses like Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, or educational and cultural institutions like the ‘People’s Palace’, also in London’s East End); and beyond city limits, allotments, cooperative farms and assisted emigration (Booth 1890).

More secular visionaries like Ebenezer Howard proposed ‘garden cities’, invariably limited in size – in Howard’s case clusters of interdependent towns, each of 30–50,000 inhabitants, sufficiently large as a group to offer all the cultural and welfare institutions expected of a big city, but each small enough to combine the benefits of town and country living (Hall 2002). Like earlier ideal cities (never built) such as J. S. Buckingham’s ‘New Victoria’ (1849), geometrically symmetrical around Avenues of Unity, Peace, Concord, Justice, Fortitude, Faith, Hope and Charity, or Benjamin Richardson’s ‘Hygeia: A City of Health’ (1876), Howard’s

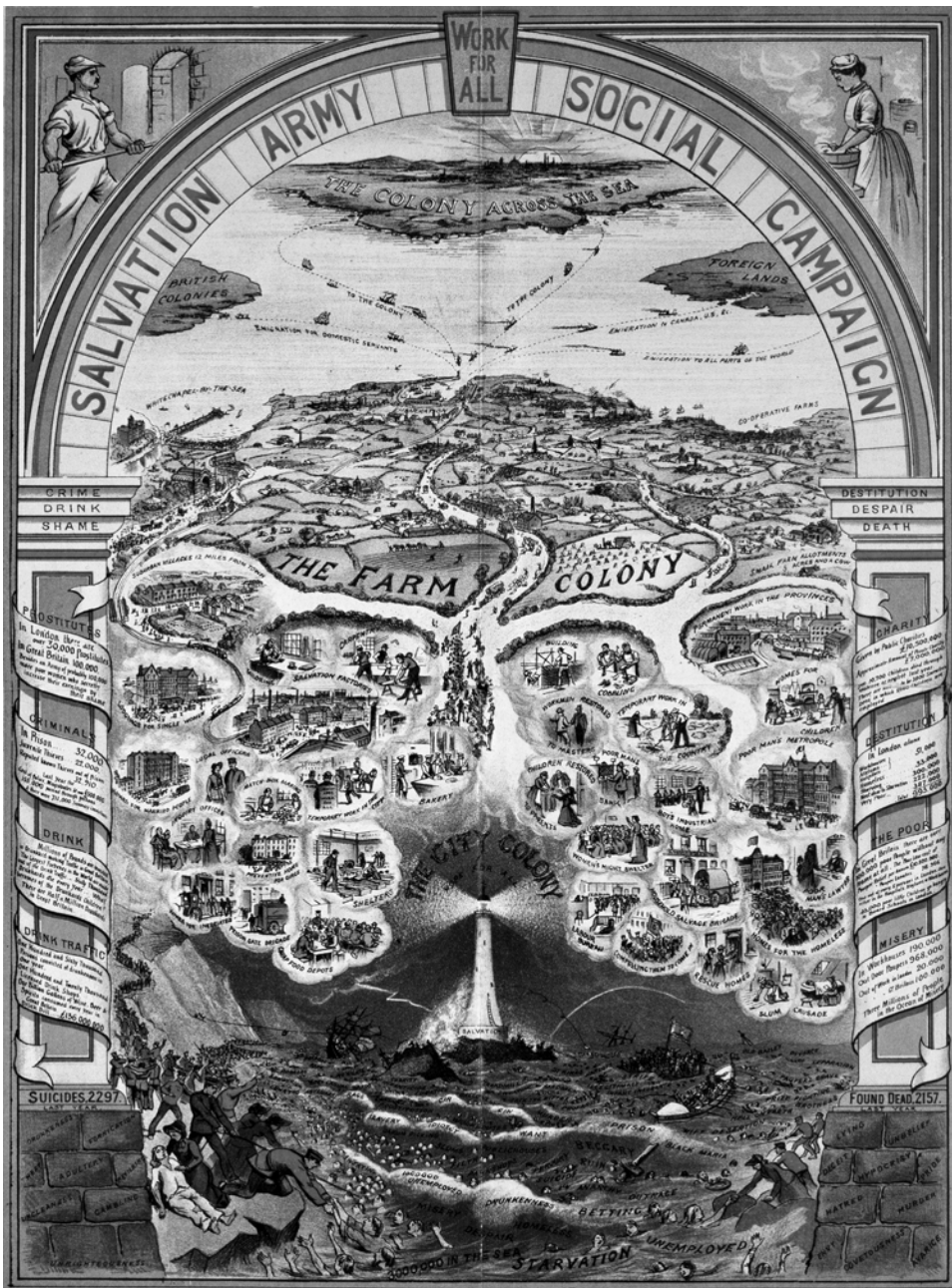


Figure 13.1 Salvation Army Social Campaign propaganda poster.
Private collection. The Bridgeman Art Library

ideas reflected a widespread anti-urbanism in English-speaking society, a fear that the size, density and impersonality of big cities militated against civilised life. William Morris, in *News from Nowhere* (1893), looked forward to a time when Manchester had been eradicated, London shrunk and most of the population returned to an idyllic pre-industrial existence scattered across the countryside. H. G. Wells offered a chilling prophecy in *The Time Machine* (1895), where the relationship between above-ground Eloi and subterranean Morlocks mirrored, in extreme form, that between above-stairs and below-stairs classes, West End and East End, in his own society. Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold (1872) ended their ‘pilgrimage’ around London, with the spectacle of the city in ruins; but the tone and density of many of Doré’s engravings also emphasised the darkness and congestion of docks, slums and city streets, as if this was a city with an ominous future.

Yet a concentration on the overcrowded, unhealthy, exploitative, dehumanising and anonymous tendencies in urban life has to be tempered by contrary dimensions of modernist writing emphasising the city as ‘the seat of cosmopolitanism’, ‘the locale of freedom’ and the site of new life-enhancing technologies (Simmel 1903). From this perspective, the problems of big cities were trumped by the opportunities they offered. Like Paris or Berlin, only more so because of its greater size and diversity, London could be celebrated for the innovative, exciting and contingent character of its modern urban life, less elegant maybe but more urgent.

AGGREGATION

Population density and overcrowding are difficult to measure objectively. Should we calculate persons per acre, per dwelling or per room? Restricting London to its continuous built-up area, I estimate the city’s population density in 1841 to have been about 61 persons per acre, almost identical to the density (60 persons per acre) for the much larger (in physical extent *and* numbers of people) County of London 60 years later. Average densities in major provincial cities were lower than in London. Liverpool averaged 52 persons per acre in 1901, Manchester-Salford 42 and Birmingham 41. The only ‘city’ in the ‘top ten’ to approach London was West Ham, effectively an extension of London beyond its eastern borders, whose 267,000 inhabitants lived at a density of 57 per acre.

Within cities, densities varied dramatically from one district to another. In 1841, the City of London (the central square mile around St Paul’s) accommodated 208 persons per acre, but by 1901 this had fallen to only 40, reflecting the displacement of residences by warehouses and offices. But Newington, still in the suburbs of south London in 1841 with 87 persons per acre, boasted 194 per acre in 1901; Bethnal Green had increased from 97 to 172, Islington from 18 to 108 (Histpop 2011). What this implies is that the *experience* of density intensified, simply because of the growth of overall numbers. Living in central London in 1841, it was possible to escape the pressures of high densities by walking to Islington. Living in Islington in 1901, there was no way within walking distance of escaping other people.

Another measure of density is the number of persons per dwelling, which increased in London from 7.4 persons per inhabited house in 1841 to 7.9 in 1901. Occupancy rates in provincial cities were generally lower, and declined over time:

in Liverpool from 6.9 to 5.6, in Glasgow from 5.4 to 4.9, and in Leeds from 4.8 to 4.5 persons per dwelling. Only West Ham, with an average of 6.5 persons per dwelling in 1901, approached London. By this measure, the densest areas of London were St Giles's, Bloomsbury and Holborn (10–11 persons per house) in 1841, and Finsbury and Westminster (11–12 persons per house) in 1901. To some extent this reflects truly overcrowded dwellings – St Giles's was a notorious rookery in early Victorian London, and parts of Westminster and Finsbury were still ripe for slum clearance 60 years later. But it also reflects affluence – the numbers of resident domestic servants adding to the size of households in middle-class areas – and the size of houses.

In late nineteenth-century slum clearance schemes, one new habitable room was provided for every two persons displaced, indicating that an occupancy rate of two persons per room was considered acceptable; but more than this, e.g. five or six people living in a two-room flat or more than eight people in a four-room house, constituted overcrowding. In 1901, among the residents of Finsbury, more than 35 per cent, and in Bethnal Green and Shoreditch almost 30 per cent, lived in dwellings at a rate of more than two persons per room. There were still a few cases of ten or more people living in one room; more commonly, and therefore more shocking, there were 2,857 cases in these three boroughs alone, of four or more people living in one room.

High densities and growing populations were important, first, because they intensified pressure on the existing infrastructure of water supply and waste disposal. Increasing volumes of sewage overloaded inadequate drains, existing sewers (which were often rivers, albeit now mostly culverted or underground) and cesspits. In London, human and animal waste overflowed into the subsoil or poured into the Thames to pollute drinking water drawn from wells or river, thereby facilitating outbreaks of cholera, typhus and other waterborne diseases. Anxiety about public health stimulated local government reform, including creation of a Metropolitan Commission of Sewers in 1848, soon superseded by the Metropolitan Board of Works (1855) with wider powers to improve sewerage, demolish slums and cut new streets intended to improve the circulation of air as well as traffic (White 2007).

Concern about ventilation in densely built slums, and access to fresh air in cities where countryside lay beyond easy walking distance, also prompted the movement for public parks, conceived as cities' 'lungs', including the laying out of Birkenhead Park (designed by Joseph Paxton, opened in 1847), and Victoria Park (1845) and Battersea Park (1858) in east and south London, both designed by James Pennethorne, who had previously been apprenticed to John Nash, whose Regent's Park, started in the 1810s, had only been opened to the general public in the 1830s (Conway 1991).

Third, high densities implied congestion, of pedestrian and vehicular traffic above ground as well as sewers underground. In Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain's promotion of a 'civic gospel' of municipal improvement found expression in the construction of a Paris-style boulevard, Corporation Street (1882). In early Victorian London, new streets, including New Oxford Street, Victoria Street and Commercial Street, required their own acts of parliament and complex financial arrangements to ensure their completion. Although prompted partly by the desire

to relieve traffic congestion, they also provided excuses to eradicate notorious ‘rookeries’ and increase local property values (and, thereby, tax assessments) by creating new street frontages (Tyack 1990). After the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works, further developments included Charing Cross Road, Shaftesbury Avenue, and the multi-purpose Embankment, which narrowed and effectively canalised the Thames, eliminated stinking mudflats, diverted road traffic away from the narrow and frequently blocked Strand and Fleet Street, and accommodated both the main intercepting sewer and the Metropolitan District underground railway (Porter 1998).

Fourth, high densities were thought to facilitate the spread of contagious diseases: the denser the population, the greater the contagion and the worse the miasma. While these problems mainly affected the poorest, the social geography of many cities, whereby rich and poor lived apart, but near one another – a front-street/back-street scale of residential segregation – meant that disease could spread into middle-class areas. Some commentators opposed construction of new sewers, fearing that miasma-carrying sewer gases given off by waste from poor districts would escape into the homes of better-off families who lived ‘down-sewer’ from the poor (Allen 2008). On the other hand, the anxiety that cholera, smallpox and typhus were no respecters of persons was a stimulus to sanitary and housing reform: a case of enlightened self-interest.

Physical contagion could be paralleled by moral contagion (Driver 1988). In closely packed slums, the respectable poor – low-paid labourers, porters, building workers – were obliged to live in the same streets, if not the same houses, as a ‘residuum’ of petty criminals, idlers and those who squandered their occasional earnings on drink. In *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (Mearns 1883: 11), Andrew Mearns opined that:

One of the saddest results of this over-crowding is the inevitable association of honest people with criminals . . . There can be no question that numbers of habitual criminals would never have become such, had they not by force of circumstances been packed together in these slums with those who were hardened in crime.

Within the home, teenage children might have to share a bed with parents or siblings of the opposite sex. Middle-class imaginations ran riot at the thought of the sexual depravity that might result.

COMMUNITY

However, positive versions of contagion were also imaginable: among the expanding middle classes, innovations spread by a combination of word of mouth and observing neighbours who had already installed, for example, a water closet, gas lighting or linoleum flooring, or had purchased a piano or a pram (all items discussed in Flanders 2003). Among model housing agencies, the East End Dwellings Company justified ‘associated dwellings’ (locating one- and three-room flats next to one another and obliging their tenants to share sanitary and cooking facilities) on the grounds that poor families would be influenced for good by the

example of their relatively affluent three-room neighbours. High densities also provided new opportunities for social interaction, the weight of numbers needed to justify special-interest groups and clubs, new forms of ‘community’ that extended beyond the street or the tenement block but still required members to live within walking distance.

For most town dwellers, community was still primarily neighbourhood-based: for example, the shared facilities of a court, functioning as a semi-private space. At the century’s end, when Charles Booth’s assistants accompanied policemen on their beats, updating Booth’s poverty map of London, which coloured each street according to its ‘poverty class’, they frequently noted the existence of ‘open doors’, children playing in the street, and women gossiping (Booth 1897–99). To Booth, these were signs not of community and trust, but of casual attitudes to property, a disregard for what should be private and personal; but to residents, this relaxed outdoor behaviour constituted their performance of ‘community’. As Anna Davin (1996: 61) concludes in discussing the experiences of children ‘growing up poor’, ‘[t]he boundaries of the household were relatively permeable. Neighbours in the same house or street sometimes shared responsibilities and resources. A child, or an old person, might sleep in one house and eat in another’.

There were, moreover, differences in perception between male observers who tended to look on the outside and converse, if at all, with authority figures such as clergymen and school-board visitors, and female investigators who combined ‘social exploration’ with roles as health visitors or rent collectors, and engaged in conversation with mothers and children (Ross 2001). Increasing municipal intervention in the form of by-laws and building regulations attempted to eliminate ‘cellular’ and ‘promiscuous’ community spaces in favour of an ‘open’ and ‘encapsulated’ structure of through streets, which were clearly ‘public’, and self-contained dwellings, each with their own sanitary amenities, which were equally clearly ‘private’ (Daunton 1983). But this could only be applied to new developments, and there were far too many dwellings of the old kind for them all to be labelled as slums and subject to clearance. So areas like Salford’s ‘classic slum’ – ‘some thirty streets and alleys locked along the north and south by two railway systems a furlong apart’ (Roberts 1973: 16) – survived until well into the twentieth century. Roberts (1973: 124) emphasised that

[i]n spite of abounding poverty it would be wrong to assume that the district lay slumped in despair. Much banter and good-natured teasing was to be heard. People laughed easily, whistled, sang, and on high days jiggered in the street – that great recreation room.

Yet we should not romanticise this ‘culture of poverty’: close personal relations involved not only good neighbourliness but also dissent, conflict and violence: ‘bloody battles with belt and clog – street against street’ (Roberts 1973: 156), not to mention domestic violence and sexual abuse. Annie Chapman, one of Jack the Ripper’s victims in London’s East End in 1888, had bruises on her temple and chest, caused by a fight with another inmate of the common lodging-house where she lived just before her murder. They had quarrelled over the loan of a piece of soap.

Far from functioning as close-knit, mutually supportive communities, these densely packed courts and tenements sometimes displayed the worst consequences of loneliness, anonymity and indifference. A few weeks after Chapman's death, Mary Kelly became another victim, murdered in her own one-room dwelling in Miller's Court, Spitalfields. The occupant of the room above Kelly's claimed that around 4 am she 'distinctly heard . . . a cry of "Oh! Murder"'. But she paid no notice because 'they were continually hearing cries of murder in the court' (Dennis 2008a: 174).

SEGREGATION

One response to the pressures of too many strangers was for those who had any choice to retreat into socially or ethnically homogeneous residential areas. Yet the degree of segregation was still limited before the late nineteenth century. In Leeds, for example, David Ward found that '[a]lthough a small but growing minority of the middle class were increasingly concentrated in the most desirable sections of the city, the remaining residents lived in environs and amongst neighbours of diverse social strata'. This lack of segregation was echoed in the wide social base of many mid-century reform and protest movements, which recruited support not only from 'factory workers, artisans and domestic outworkers' but also among 'shopkeepers, petty proprietors and lesser professionals' (Ward 1980: 133, 159). There is a danger in seeing segregation simply through the eyes of an upper middle-class elite, who *were* more segregated than ever, but constituted only a tiny minority of all city dwellers. Even in London, the evidence of Charles Booth's poverty maps is that while there were some exclusively 'gold' areas occupied only by the rich (and their servants), there were many more districts where adjacent streets were coloured red, pink, purple and light blue – the range from prosperous tradespeople to the respectable poor (Reeder 1987).

Nonetheless, as city centres became more congested, noisy and polluted, and as land values increased, there was an incentive for professionals and tradesmen, who had hitherto lived over or behind their shop, counting house or office, to move their families to healthy suburbs and convert or redevelop their old homes to accommodate purely commercial or financial functions. In Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (drawing on Bennett's experience of growing up in the Potteries in the 1870s), Darius Clayhanger, who ran a printing business in the centre of 'Bursley', moves to 'Bleakridge', up above the town, away from the smoke. He:

was achieving the supreme peak of greatness – he was about to live away from business. Soon he would be 'going down to business' of a morning. . . . Ages ago he had got as far as a house with a lobby to it. Now, it would be a matter of two establishments.

(Bennett 1910: Vol. 2, [Chapter 3](#))

The modest scale of suburbanisation in 'Bursley' was facilitated by 'the new steam-cars' – steam-powered trams needed to cope with steep hills. In less hilly towns, horse-drawn trams fulfilled the same role. In the largest cities, especially London, commuting by train became common, first for the middle classes and, with the

introduction of cheap early morning fares, selectively in the late 1860s and more widely in the 1880s, for skilled workingmen (Kellett 1969).

New suburban developments tended to be more homogeneous than the old piecemeal, front-street/back-yard morphology of city centres. In *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), George Gissing parodied the current trend for labelling new suburbs as ‘parks’ – south London suburbs included Merton Park, Clapham Park, Stockwell Park, Loughborough Park – when what they had in common were rows of terraced houses and villas occupying the grounds of what once had been, but no longer was, private parkland. *In the Year of Jubilee* was set in Camberwell, where new developments were still quite small in scale – the most prolific builder in this part of south London was Edward Yates, who built over 2,500 houses over 35 years, but his largest project comprised only ten streets (742 terraced houses) (Dyos 1961, 1982). Builders erecting houses on speculation, and landlords investing in houses to rent, favoured properties that resembled their immediate neighbours, where they need not fear that houses might lose their value over time or become unlettable because something undesirable like a polluting factory or a slum had been built next door. But the result could still be a patchwork of subtly different qualities and styles. Booth coloured his map of Camberwell a mix of gold (wealthy), red (well-to-do) and pink (fairly comfortable), and Gissing differentiated between the Dagmar Road home of Samuel Barmby (‘a new and most respectable house, with bay windows rising from the half-sunk basement to the second storey’), the Peachey family’s pretentious villa a few streets away in De Crespigny Park (‘unattached, double-fronted . . . a flight of steps to the stucco pillars at the entrance’), and Mr Vawdrey’s secluded mansion on Champion Hill, farther south and commanding a better view (‘large houses and spacious gardens on either hand . . . One might have imagined it a country road, so profound the stillness and so leafy the prospect’). Occasionally, however, suburban developments went badly wrong. Less than a mile away was Hollington Street, three-storey houses like Dagmar Road, but overcrowded, characterised by Charles Booth’s investigator as ‘drunk & rough, wife beating, assaults’ (Booth 1897–99: District 41, B365–103).

Not all of the middle classes opted for the suburbs. Tenements (blocks of flats for the middle classes as much as the poor) had long been common in Scottish cities (Rodger 2001). Seeing how frequently large terraced houses in inner London were subdivided for occupation by several households, but without any corresponding duplication of sanitary facilities, some architects advocated purpose-built self-contained flats, for rich as well as poor. The first middle-class flats in 1850s London were variously referred to as ‘houses on the Scotch principle’ or ‘French flats’ (reflecting their association with a Parisian lifestyle), but it took another 30 years before ‘mansion flats’ were widely accepted as a way of metropolitan living (Tarn 1974). Compared to Scotland or France, in London they were less often occupied by families but provided homes for new types of household – spinsters, widows, bachelors and childless couples who would previously have taken lodgings or lived with relatives – or *pieds-à-terre* for MPs, entertainers and businessmen who had first homes in the countryside. ‘French flats’ were suspected because, having all their rooms on the same floor, they provided insufficient separation between the more public rooms, where visitors might be entertained, and the truly



Figure 13.2 *The Road to Sydenham*, 1871, Pissarro, Camille (1831–1903). Private collection. Photo © Christie's Images. The Bridgeman Art Library

private space of bedrooms. It proved difficult to separate servants from residents and their guests, unless back staircases and tradesmen's entrances could be fitted in; and flats were surrounded by a range of not-quite-private, not-quite-public spaces – courtyards, staircases, lifts (in luxury flats) and flat roofs (shared by tenants in more modest blocks as recreational space), contrary to the modernist preference for differentiating private and public (Dennis 2008b).

Inner and central cities also became less socially mixed as slum clearance targeted areas perceived as harbouring the dissolute, immoral and criminal. The demolition of 'rookeries' provided convenient and relatively cheap land for new railway lines – Dickens's 'Stagg's Gardens' on the line of the London and Birmingham Railway in *Dombey and Son* (1848) or, decades later, the real Agar Town in the path of the Midland Railway into St Pancras – or new roads – St Giles's dissected and partially demolished by New Oxford Street in the late 1830s, the Devil's Acre targeted by Victoria Street a decade later (Tyack 1990). Invariably, the former residents were simply displaced, squeezed into a smaller supply of poor-quality housing, while the beneficiaries were skilled artisans, policemen, carters and railway workers in regular employment. Engels had described the slums of Manchester in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845). He returned to the topic in the 1870s, focusing particularly on a district 'in the valley bottom of the Medlock River, which under the name of Little Ireland was for years the disgrace of Manchester'. Little Ireland had been replaced by a railway station. However, it had not been truly abolished, but simply shifted from one side of Oxford Road to the other where 'it still continues to flourish' (Engels 1887: 69–70).

MOBILITY AND CONTINGENCY

Faced with such disruption, compounded by the absence of unemployment benefit or old-age pensions to provide some security of income, it is unsurprising that many Victorian city dwellers, and not only those displaced from slums, moved house frequently. Most people rented from private landlords. Only in a few suburbs were as many as 20 per cent of households owner-occupiers. Lower middle-class clerks and shopkeepers, and the most highly paid skilled workers, a so-called 'labour aristocracy', aspired to homeownership as a sign of respectability and upward social mobility. At the end of George and Weedon Grossmith's gentle satire, *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892), city clerk Charles Pooter achieves his ambition of acquiring the deeds of his Holloway terraced house that he had previously rented; but for most families homeownership was unattainable, and for many who could have afforded it, it was irrelevant. They preferred to keep up with fashion by moving from one tenanted house to another. In Gissing's *The Whirlpool* (1897), Harvey and Alma Rolfe live in Pinner, then a village in Middlesex, although well connected to central London by the Metropolitan Railway, but soon move to Gunnersbury, another middle-class West London suburb, where their son can attend the kindergarten run by a family friend. Harvey explains that 'if one lives in London, it's in the nature of things to change houses once a year or so' (Gissing 1897: 207). Better-off flat-dwellers were even more nomadic. In Oxford & Cambridge Mansions, luxury flats that also feature in *The Whirlpool*, fewer than one in five households stayed for as long as seven years.

In the uncontrolled private market of the slums, renters were constantly moving between lodgings, but they rarely moved far. In Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889), when Pennyloaf Candy, 17, marries Bob Hewett, 19, they live in six or seven different lodgings over their first two years of married life. One aim of model dwellings was to offer secure homes to the respectable working classes, to obviate the need for such frequent moves: tenants who moved into the Peabody Trust's Herbrand Street estate when it opened in 1885, stayed on average six years and eight months in the same flat, but over nine years on the same estate (Dennis 2008b: 250–53). By 1903, one migrant family from Suffolk had lived in nine different flats of varying sizes out of the 205 available for rent on the estate. With few possessions of your own, and only a week's notice to be given, it was easy to move a short distance to a slightly bigger, or smaller, or nicer flat, and still remain among the same community of friends, and close to shops where you were granted credit.

Surveying the whole range of Liverpool's population through the 1850s and 1870s, Colin Pooley (1979) found that 60 per cent were still at the same address one year later, but only 18 per cent after ten years. Professionals were three times as likely as the unskilled to remain at the same address, migrants from Ireland or distant parts of England and Wales were less likely to stay than the local born, and household heads aged under 35 were more likely to move than older heads. However, among those whose moves could be traced, the better-off were much more inclined to move out of their local communities, across the city or to more suburban areas.

While examples of extreme immobility – East End children who had never seen the countryside or never visited other parts of London – were popular with

investigative journalists, most city dwellers were familiar with more than their immediate surroundings. The rhythms of routine mobility – regular journeys to work, shop, pub or church – could reinforce segregation, as individuals occupied the same spaces but at different times. To take advantage of cheap fares, working men were obliged to travel before 6 am, long before Mr Pooter and his fellow clerks made their commute by horse tram or suburban train, and longer still before Mrs Pooter travelled into the West End to visit Peter Robinson's or Liberty's. However, the co-workings of aggregation, segregation and mobility also gave rise to interaction, as different groups and individuals found their lives intersecting, by accident as well as design. Elizabeth Gaskell (1855: Chapter 8) recounted how middle-class Margaret Hale, newly moved from southern England to the northern industrial city of 'Milton' was 'very unfortunate in constantly falling in with' factory workers until she 'had learnt the times of their ingress and egress'. In *Twice Round the Clock* (1859), George Augustus Sala represented each hour of the day and night by reference to specific sites and activities in London – 4 am was represented by Billingsgate fish market, 8 pm by the contrast between opera at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket and a pawnbroker's near Seven Dials; but in practice each site was a kaleidoscope of different classes, ages and genders. William McConnell's illustration for 2 pm – Regent Street – included not only 'self-important carriage folk' but also 'a suspicious-looking street-vendor selling dogs, a blind beggar in the thick of the crowd and . . . a prostitute addressing a moustachioed man' (Arscott 2000: 827–28).

Malcolm Bradbury (1991: 97–99) drew attention to the 'unutterable contingency of the modern city', which created opportunities for generating new ideas, making new friends and engaging in new forms of experience. Bradbury focused on the role of cities in the rise of the novel: cities contained 'the essential literary institutions: publishers, patrons, libraries, museums, bookshops, theatres, magazines', but also 'the intensities of cultural friction, and the frontiers of experience . . . the rapid change of personnel, the influx of visitors, the noise of many languages, the vivid trade in ideas and styles'. The plots of Victorian novels are often constructed around coincidence, and coincidence was more believable in big cities. In *Workers in the Dawn*, Arthur gains his apprenticeship with the printseller, Samuel Tollady, by happening to look in Tollady's shop window in Charlotte Place while he is passing on an errand from his home in Seven Dials. Later, the society painter, Gresham, passes the same shop while taking a shortcut home from the Strand to his house on Portland Place, sees Arthur's copy of his own painting in the window and decides to inquire about Arthur, thereby setting in train a complex and in many ways incredible story, except that the spatial practices on which it is based are perfectly believable excursions through the city's streets.

People living in crowded lodgings with little private space of their own needed places where they could be 'private in public'. For Clerkenwell slum-dwellers in *The Nether World*, privacy was found by seeking the anonymity afforded by visiting other places. Bob Hewett and Clem Snowdon, childhood friends but now married to other people, strike up a liaison when they bump into one another on High Holborn. They adjourn to the British Museum, where they can be confident they won't meet any of their neighbours, and agree to later meetings in a pastry shop in Old Street, east of their home neighbourhood, and on the Thames

Embankment, a mile to the south. Bridges over the Thames and railway stations were other common settings for private or anonymous encounters.

In some cases, different classes deliberately sought adventure and experience by venturing into the world of the ‘other’, reflecting what Dickens called ‘the attraction of repulsion’ (Sicher 2007). Both well-meaning philanthropists and thrill-seeking rakes went ‘slumming’ (Koven 2004). Their activities were combined in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Early in the novel, Dorian, living in the fashionable, aristocratic West End, intends to engage in charitable work in the East End, playing piano duets in a Whitechapel club. Instead, ‘in search of adventure’, Dorian wanders ever farther ‘eastward’ (Chapter 4), gradually descending into a dissolute life of selfish and mindless pleasure, in ‘dreadful places near Blue Gate Fields’, ‘a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel’ (Chapter 11) and finally an opium den in the far East End. For all the melodramatic orientalism of Wilde’s story, it typifies the attraction of repulsion in Victorian attitudes to London’s East End: it is a place of the imagination, peopled by monsters and devils, but for investigative journalists like George Sims (*How the Poor Live*, 1883), or inveterate novelist-ramblers like Dickens and Gissing, it was also easily accessible.

But if the rich could venture into poor neighbourhoods, so could the poor explore westwards. The demonstration by unemployed workers in Trafalgar Square and subsequent rioting in Pall Mall and St James’s in February 1886 was represented as ‘East End’ invading ‘West End’ (Jones 1971). Bill Sikes led Oliver Twist across London from Bethnal Green through Smithfield, the length of Oxford Street, then hitching a succession of lifts all the way to Sunbury-on-Thames, to conduct a burglary (Dickens 1838). In *The Nether World*, Gissing depicted a bank holiday ‘invasion’ of the Crystal Palace, the building originally erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851, but subsequently relocated to suburban south London, by a riotous group of youths travelling by train from the slums of Clerkenwell. They are less interested in the high culture offered by the Crystal Palace’s collections of antiquities and sculpture than in dancing, drinking and fireworks.

SPECTACLE

Cities became sites of spectacle: for the boldest, viewed from a hot air balloon; for the less adventurous, through ‘balloon views’, at first presented as panoramas in domed buildings like the Regent’s Park Colosseum, later reproduced in photographs in illustrated magazines (Barber and Wickstead 2010). Less elevated views from atop inner-city railway viaducts provided eyewitness versions of the cartographic gaze offered by large-scale Ordnance Survey plans and maps of disease and poverty. There may have been fewer flâneurs on the streets of British cities than on continental boulevards, but there was still plenty to see. New public and private buildings proliferated, variously Classical or Gothic in style, the former at first associated with rational authority, the latter with enterprise, emulating renaissance merchant princes, and signalling the revival of medievalism. Municipalities competed to erect the grandest civic buildings: the austere classicism of Liverpool’s St George’s Hall matched by the classical baroque of Leeds Town Hall in the 1850s,

Bradford's and Manchester's Town Halls in the fashionable Gothic of the 1870s, Birmingham's more eclectic Council House and Art Gallery, and Glasgow's City Chambers mixing the styles in the late 1880s (Hunt 2004, Tyack 2000). In each city, these and other municipal buildings fronted onto public squares that, as in the case of Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square and the more accidental Bank Junction (in front of the Bank of England) in London, offered stages for popular demonstrations and choreographed spectacle: processions associated with royal visits and commemorations; civic events, such as the annual Lord Mayor's Show in the City of London; military and sectarian parades; and political and trade union rallies.

New streets and buildings also provided subject matter for the painting of spectacular cityscapes (Arscott 2000): John O'Connor's theatrical representations of St Pancras from Pentonville Road and the Victoria Embankment from Somerset House; Frith's social panorama of Paddington Station; Hicks's animated scenes of 'The General Post Office: One Minute to Six' (just before closing time) and 'Dividend Day at the Bank of England'; and the spectacle of unique events such as William Wyllie's depiction of the opening of Tower Bridge (1894) or John Lavery's record of the Glasgow International Exhibition (1888).

More atmospheric urban experiences included Atkinson Grimshaw's paintings of moon- and gas-lit scenes, invariably focusing on the play of light on rain-soaked streets and quaysides. Grimshaw's romanticisation was matched by Whistler's aestheticisation, especially in nocturnes of the Thames around Battersea, and by Camille Pissarro's impressionist views of South London suburbia where he lived in 1871, replicated for Glasgow suburbs by Lavery's paintings of the middle classes at play: 'The Tennis Party' and 'Lady on a Safety Tricycle' (both 1885).

CONCLUSION

Cities were not islands, but nodes in networks through which information, ideas, peoples and goods were constantly being exchanged. London's status as 'imperial metropolis' and Glasgow's as 'second city of empire' were demonstrated in a range of imperial – and occasionally anti-imperial – spaces: docks, colonial offices, banks, museums, zoos and botanical gardens, but also the more mundane spaces of bungalows, street names that recalled colonial history, suburban gardens with exotic plants, and department stores that specialised in imported fabrics and furniture, or supplied those setting out for distant lands, offered mail order services to the colonies and, in the case of the Army & Navy Co-operative Stores, based in London's Victoria Street, even established branches in Bombay and Calcutta (Driver and Gilbert 1999, Schneer 1999). Conversely, cities of empire emulated London: Montreal had its own Crystal Palace exhibition building; Melbourne's suburbs included Richmond, Kew and even Camberwell (Davison 1978).

Aggregation had critical if sometimes contradictory consequences; problems of congestion and contagion fuelled desire for separation and segregation, but also offered new opportunities for interaction, both within ethnically or class-defined neighbourhoods and through accidents of contingency. Citizens were increasingly mobile, whether moving between lodgings or in their everyday journeys. Technology, within homes and workplaces, but crucially in the infrastructure of public

utilities, transport and communications, facilitated mobility and the efficient functioning of cities with more complex spatial structures. Processes and structures trickled down to smaller places where aggregation was not such a pressing problem, but local pride demanded adoption of the latest innovations and even the identification of fashionable problems: every town, however modest, claimed to suffer from slums and prostitution (Briggs 1968: 377). In solving such problems, and in responding to pressures for economic growth, cities became modern: places of constantly ‘creative destruction’, spectacles to be consumed but also sites of anxiety, places of freedom and fulfilment but also of mental and physical displacement.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CULTURE OF 'ENVIRONMENTALITY' AND THE EXCEPTIONALITY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE



William Taylor

INTRODUCTION

'Nature' clearly shaped nineteenth-century European society. Whether this was a uniquely 'Victorian world' is open to question, as debates over the scope, content and methods of Victorian studies suggest.¹ Putting these aside, it seems clear from research on varied topics like aesthetics and the picturesque, nature and the built environment and the 'colonial earth' (Macarthur 2007; Taylor 2004; Bonyhady 2000) that changing perceptions of the natural world helped create the dynamism of nineteenth-century life. Emerging and mutually reinforcing patterns of visibility, building and representation contributed to an environmental context for self-understanding and cultural recognition. This was grounds for love of natural scenery and nostalgia for rural idylls, but also for early forms of environmental activism. Recent studies of large-scale demographic, ecological and cultural contexts for understanding nineteenth-century imperialism (for example, Davis 2001; Griffiths and Robin 1997; Belich 2009) provoke questions about how environmental discourse and power helped shape the Victorian era.

A survey of meanings ascribed by the Victorians to nature and its varied landscapes reveals a changing domain of ideas and language, building and horticultural practices. These include extramural locations making for 'the countryside' where nature was often idealised. This perspective appeared along with large numbers of people retreating from the country and agrarian ways of living and crowding into cities in a remarkably short period of time (Briggs 1963; Mancoff and Trela 1996). Overwhelmingly, this was a domain seen from a metropolitan perspective. Cities, the built environment and ways of living in buildings provided a platform from which to observe the natural world, its vitality and transformation by humankind. This perspective on nature was also expansive, informed by exploration and colonisation, territorial acquisition and overseas migration by European peoples. Its global reach was guided by reasoning about *organic* nature that connected far-flung parts of the globe in novel ways. Unique experiences of nature in home counties and distant colonies, in territory deemed ready for the plough and pasture

were added to those occurring in the more exotic settings for ‘green imperialism’ (Grove 1996). These experiences were reported back to the metropolitan centres, informing attitudes towards the natural world as a whole.

This chapter describes a conceptual and physical domain not formed by any one idea about nature; rather, it focuses on urban, domestic and rural contexts for the novel environmental sensibilities that characterised nineteenth-century life. Amongst other consequences, new ways of thinking about and experiencing nature bound Victorians to each other and the metropolis to its hinterlands in different ways. These were contexts in which expectations of what nature should look like in aesthetic terms were confronted by growing suspicions raised by a seemingly invisible organic world, which impacted on every living creature, uniformly, spontaneously and constantly. Subsequently, lines of philosophical inquiry into sublime nature and the painterly picturesque conveyed from eighteenth-century literature (Burke 1756; Gilpin 1782) become less topical than questions about the suitability of living species for their environs. Prevailing interests in creating exotic worlds in glasshouses and conservatories (Hix 1974; Koppelkamm 1981) were coupled with growing awareness of the environmental conditions within public buildings and residential districts, in the countryside and places further afield. New ideas about nature and an expanding array of representational, design and horticultural practices aimed at making Victorians feel comfortable and ‘at home’ whether they occupied metropolitan centres, the countryside or the margins of empire.

PICTURESQUE LANGUAGE, LANDSCAPES AND PEOPLE

The ‘picturesque’ alerts us to the development and global dispersal of language for evaluating landscapes during the Victorian era. The term pre-dates environmental science, though one could argue it helped shape thinking *about* the environment. It was useful for Victorians to describe the aesthetic pleasures of nature and possibly enhance these through architectural design and landscape gardening. Like Darwinism, the picturesque drew on an understanding of the physical contiguity and wholeness of nature (emphasising its visual composition) as these qualities were presumed for centuries in Western thought.

On the whole, scholars have treated the ‘picturesque’ as one idea in a history of gardening terms and styles originating with Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight and Humphrey Repton (Macarthur 2007: 9–15). As a movement imported into the United States around 1800, the picturesque encouraged the positive re-evaluation of America’s colonial architecture, along with antiquarianism, the humble cottage and an ‘Old English mindset’ (Maynard 2000).

Claims for ‘picturesqueness’ in a painting or landscape could open fissures between different types of people and their respective concerns. By the Victorian era differences appeared within an aristocratic elite that had lost some of its inherited authority, and an audience for its erudite tastes and philosophical concepts. Other openings developed within a growing ensemble of Victorian experts, like landscape gardeners and architects, critics and social reformers (like John Loudon and John Ruskin), who took ideas like the picturesque and developed them to suit their own purposes. Increasingly, as the nineteenth century advanced, almost any

landscape (and many other things) could be called 'picturesque'. The adjective became popularised and largely conventional, emotive and socially resonant, but devoid of any consistent meaning.

As prompts for social commentary that mix aesthetic and moral valuations, one might compare 'the picturesque' to 'the parochial'. Once, to be parochial was to be situated in either town or country in a meaningful way. It meant living where one's forebears did, in view of the parish church steeple and within hearing of its bells. Now, the term commonly describes someone who is 'limited or provincial in outlook or scope' (*OED*) – a country 'bumpkin' or rustic 'yokel' or maybe a 'hayseed' (in American, Australian and New Zealand parlance). These are all labels rooted in the English landscape to describe people dissociated from the nurturing influence of urban life and culture.

Over the course of the nineteenth century new environmental terms took precedence over the 'picturesque', positioning Victorians within nature and society, town and country in different ways. Partly defined as 'the conditions under which any person or thing lives or is developed' (*OED*) the 'environment' and environmental reasoning shaped lexicons serving multiple disciplines, visual cultures and literatures. Hence, in 1830, the essayist Thomas Carlyle is able to praise the aesthetic merits of a town for 'its kind picturesque environment'. In 1880, an expert on jurisprudence, extolling the virtues of the English Constitution, observed more precisely:

The English Constitution is what it is because Englishmen have been what they have been, and have passed through the history that has been theirs; and the Constitution is changing as it is, because the people are what they are, and are working out their own particular destiny. The political framework is the resultant of the force; operating from the people on their environment, and from their environment on the people.

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 8 May 1880: 7)

Victorian perceptions of contexts that 'modify or determine the development of life or character' (*OED*) did not become common simply because an 'environment', whether in the language of poetry or law, was immediately obvious or spontaneously experienced. The 'Anglophone settler explosion' (Belich 2009: 21) during the nineteenth century helped convey particular perceptions of urban and natural landscapes as providing contexts for living species (especially humankind) to adapt and evolve, thrive or wither. Of course, not all of these perceptions are reducible to the determining influence and global reach of the English language, environmental science or Darwinism alone. Nonetheless, the growth of Anglophone communities worldwide in the nineteenth century helped make English the *lingua franca* for environmental thinking (Bowler 1992: 310–14).

THE VICTORIAN CULTURE OF 'ENVIRONMENTALITY'

In Victorian cities opportunities for observing the influence and character of nature occurred not only in the authoritative arena of botanical gardens and natural history museums, but also in all kinds of urban environs and social settings. Commonly

directed at first to the most fundamental elements of nature, to earth, air and water, this was environmental discourse that encouraged reflection on the broader ‘departments’ of nature and the landscapes, geographical settings and climatic zones that made places of settlement ‘topographically’ meaningful (Yi-fu Tuan 1974). This manner of understanding nature made for a kind of ‘environmentality’ requiring routine surveillance of urban and extra-urban populations, their quality of lives and the spaces and territories that accommodated them.²

Observing the influence of nature at the larger end of a spatial scale, an anonymous contributor to *The Builder* in 1865 (29 July: 537–38) described the effect of worsening atmospheric conditions in the great Reading Room of the British Museum:

Many of this industrious and useful community leave the beautiful dome, which in this light has a dim, lurid, and somewhat ghastly appearance, and grope their way homeward; a few, more persevering than others, having with difficulty managed to extract the names and particulars of a few books from the catalogue; and in the hope of the air clearing up, sit with patience, waiting until the painstaking attendants have, in the colossal space of the King’s Library, or some of the other mighty lines of book-shelves, by the aid of lanterns, carefully locked and strongly protected with glass or crystal, provided the volumes wanted.

Accentuating the novelty value as well as the intrusion of Britain’s weather into both greater and lesser buildings in such a manner proved instrumental in revealing the permeability of social settings to natural forces and pollution. Recorded in Anglophone print media, buildings, urban and rural landscapes facilitated observations of comparable intrusions of nature into living spaces. The material fabric of the built environment was instrumental in revealing and frequently worsening the impact of these atmospheric ‘disturbances’ on residents’ lives. Counterpoising scenes of fog in the British Museum with all-pervasive dust in the Australian colonies, a notice appearing in *The Brisbane Courier* in the same year (16 November 1865: 2) called public attention to ‘the plague of dust with which this city is infected’.

The language of plagues used to describe such phenomena and the analysis of their causes had a particularising effect. They helped to distinguish between Victorians on the basis of, first, where they were born and lived and, second, how such settings influenced the distinctive character and quality of their lives. Likewise, the territory on which Victorians found themselves was frequently identified by its geo-physical and atmospheric qualities. In a story like Miles Franklin’s *My Brilliant Career* (1901), readers were introduced to characteristic settings for events in faraway places, in this case, the drought stricken Australian countryside. In a chapter titled ‘A Drought Idyll’ one reads:

There was not a blade of grass to be seen, and the ground was too dusty to sit on. We were too overdone to make more than one-worded utterances, so waited silently in the blazing sun, closing our eyes against the dust. Weariness! Weariness!

In the intimate spaces of the home, in London, Birmingham and Manchester, but also other burgeoning cities of the Victorian world like New York and Melbourne, period manuals on domestic economy and household management urged careful observation of the conditions of house and garden. By this means the sensibilities of entire populations were directed to the environment of everyday life and the places in which contact with nature occurred on a regular basis. Household guides warned a growing class of homemakers to 'fortify' spaces against draughts and the infiltration of air-borne irritants (Cassell and Co. 1869: 312). The coal cellar or scuttle had to be located carefully to enable fuel to be conveyed directly from the street, 'without filling the house with dust, begriming everything, and causing endless confusion' (ibid.: 99). With a fuller knowledge of the composition of air, its supposed purity could be conceived in more certain terms. Similarly, the influence on the residents of spaces in which air was notably *impure* could be assessed. Manuals on the 'art' of warming and ventilating rooms and buildings were commonly prefaced by the most up-to-date statements of scientific fact concerning interactions between the air and human respiration and health.

Mediating between a sense of the body and the spaces it might occupy, such observations were paralleled by an increasingly complex understanding of 'atmospheric phenomena' and meteorology. Of increasing interest were the interactions between topography, temperature and air movement, barometric pressure and humidity (Ansted 1856: 10). Meteorology developed not only through the study of such phenomena, but in such a way as to question relations between atmospheric conditions and patterns of organic life that imparted a heightened sense of connectedness between the British Isles and their residents and the distinctiveness of one locale and another – between the climate of Great Britain and its colonies, for example, or between other countries across the globe (Janković 2000: 165–67; Pemble 1987). The term 'atmosphere', when applied to a particular room or garden, came to suggest in the nineteenth century the mental, moral or psychological distinctiveness of a given locale.

Encouraging this systemic and particularising way of thinking for the Victorian householder, like the botanist in their conservatory, earth and water provided points of communality between human beings and lesser species based on processes of nutrition, respiration and reproduction conducted in particular environs. As *The House and its Surroundings* (Anon. 1878: 2) described it: 'the business of life, whatever in each case it may be, compels most of us to live in a particular locality, and to take the soil, air, water and houses of that locality as we find them'. This did not mean that residents need be subservient to the demands of nature. Rather it was a call for diligence, imagination and enterprise, because everyone 'in an individual as well as a corporate capacity, can, in the administration of his own house and its surroundings, do much to influence his own health as well as that of his neighbours' (ibid.: 82).

For many centuries in European thought, the earth was little more than the ground on which a person stood or substance from which plants grew. In the nineteenth century, however, detailed knowledge of the organic and chemical composition of soil and its physical properties replaced the theory of 'humus', a longstanding belief in a material existing in the ground that *somehow* nourished plants and diminished as they grew from it. Chemistry recast the earth as the

primary resource for animal and human sustenance by providing a basic alphabet for explaining the composition and transformation, consumption and expulsion of matter. As one commentator wrote, just as ‘beef and mutton are only grass and turnips . . . in an altered state’ it followed that ‘the bodies of men are made out of soil’ (Girdlestone 1878: 35). Matter of a different, though equally fundamental, kind was valued by the proponents of sewage utilization. Urbanisation and the problem of disposing of unprecedented amounts of night soil were turned to advantage by reformers. They found new opportunity in the immense ‘rivers of guano’ swirling beneath Victorian cities by directing their flow to fields and gardens. A more scientific basis for horticultural practices allowed for greater experimentation and the introduction of a broader variety of plant species from other locales and abroad. Across the globe, science and technology transformed otherwise barren or impoverished terrain into a palette for reproducing at a smaller scale the abundance and diversity of nature’s productions (Fisher 1982). Enhanced opportunities required more expert care in manipulating soils and controlling pests and in choosing the ‘right’ species for a given locale.

Like arable land, the persistent need for water throughout the Victorian world, for sustenance and sanitation, for industry and fire-fighting, meant that its supply was historically the ‘first urban problem’ (Lampard 1973: 21). Prior to the 1830s, water was drawn mostly from common wells, ponds and reservoirs, streams and rivers and supplies of rainwater. As urbanisation accelerated, increasing demand and pollution made this situation ever more tenuous. The eventual full servicing of houses with piped water in most Victorian cities in the second half of the century made its ready availability *and* its purity a matter of near universal expectation. By the end of the century, piped water consumption provided a measure of health and social progress.

Along with observations of earth, air and water, nature was brought into the Victorian world by the threat and global reach of disease. The study of disease heightened attentiveness to the conditions in which disease thrived. A kind of social analysis became common, in which ‘moral contagion’ engendered by the environs in which the Victorians lived took precedence over their own innate constitutions *per se* (Rose 1985: 47–48). Sensitivity to the intrusions of fog and filth, dust and disease was integral to increasing anxieties about the link between environmental wholesomeness and human vitality (see Pamela Gilbert’s chapter in this book for a related perspective). However, organic nature was also a thing of wonder, encouraging personal and social aspirations. Consider the way Cuthbert Johnson’s *Our House and Garden: What We See, and What We Do Not See In Them* (1864) brought the advances of nineteenth-century science to the attention of the Victorian householder. The author described, among other phenomena, the reasons for feeling cold upon arising from bed and the dampness of different materials from which linen and bedclothes were made. He accounted for the porosity of walls and water tightness of masonry, the composition of the air, its movement, freshness or closeness, and the smells of objects within confined spaces. In Johnson’s writing the house and garden were represented as a contiguous whole – an environment in modern terms. Rooms and adjacent parterres were bound into a common domain, where nature caused things to happen and where daily habits of domestic management and self-improvement were required. It would be anachronistic to call

Johnson an 'environmentalist'. However, he contributed to a discourse whereby the Victorians came to position themselves, physically and psychologically, relative to an overarching environmental context.

COUNTRYSIDE RETREATS AND RURAL DISSENT

It is worth highlighting the ambiguous position of the Victorian countryside relative to environmental discourse. On the one hand, rural districts were made subject to reforms guided by a mix of political, economic and social aims. The countryside was construed as more or less malleable, a resource to be transformed like any other, including the material fabric of the city. On the other hand, unlike the city, the countryside could be seen as autochthonous in some measure, places of natural beauty and reserves for age-old ways of living, untouched by urbanism, comparable to other abstractions like 'wilderness' and 'natives'. Historically, the dichotomy was hardly as exact as outlined here; rather the divide between the first conception of the countryside and the other was blurred by a range of circumstances, including instances when reforms failed or when rural districts provided settings for dissent as well as for empirical observation and nostalgia.

Scotland provided an early location and leading role in the material transformation or 'improvement' of the countryside. Its intellectual establishment promoted science for the cultivation of plants, the layout and management of estates and the improvement of rural dwellings. Scots like George Mackenzie (1814) and John C. Loudon (1822, 1838) contributed to such projects of economic and social reform. At the time of Loudon's early writings, Edinburgh had the only equivalent to a present day agricultural extension service in Britain.³ The education it offered in adjacent fields like 'ornamental agriculture' provided lessons in aesthetic judgement. Principles of economy in farming were contrasted to the shifting tastes of gardening, the utility of agricultural practices contrasting the conceit of gardening styles (Loudon 1838: 94; see also Simo 1988: 4). These lessons were furthered by the growth of professional societies for natural history, agricultural and horticulture immediately preceding and during the Victorian era (Finnegan 2009; Russell 1983: 204–5). The popularisation of natural history and the amateur collecting of specimens – rocks and fossils, feathers and birds eggs, seashells, and potential consumables 'collected' by trout and salmon fishing – served to further objectify the countryside as a domain for human inquisitiveness, enterprise and pleasure (O'Connor 2007).

In many regions mixed reactions to the countryside either continued or largely ignored the influence of human activity of the previous hundred or more years. Some agricultural and horticultural practices worked to conceal the visual impacts of 'improvements' on the countryside, or resulted in rural scenery that came to be accepted as the 'real' thing. Working for the former effect, the 'ha-ha' prefigured later developments. A feature commonly associated with eighteenth-century landscape gardening, this was a trench with a perpendicular inner side, faced with masonry and dug into a contoured field. Used as a boundary to an estate's pleasure grounds or parklands, the nearly invisible ha-ha kept grazing livestock contained on one side and allowed for uninterrupted views from a country house on the other



Figure 14.1 *Shooting Party in the Highlands, Halting for Lunch*, 1840
(oil on canvas), Ansdell, Richard (1815–85). © Walker Art Gallery,
National Museums Liverpool. The Bridgeman Art Library

(Mansbach 1982). Scotland's highlands provide a much larger landscape for improvement and aesthetic reinvention. Largely initiated by the clearances, the Highlands were transformed by the abandonment of villages, the depredations of introduced livestock, coppicing of native oak and other species to supply raw materials for manufacturing, and by the creation of pine and spruce plantations (Lindsay 1977). Its chequered past of political and environmental upheaval did not deprive Victorian visitors to this increasingly popular region of the pleasures of open space, fresh air and recreational diversions anticipated in the north. The allure of the Highlands was encouraged by the growth of railways and rural tourism (Simmons 1984; Swinglehurst 1982; Pimlott 1976).

Comparable expectations for the countryside shaped experiences of other rural districts transformed by human enterprise. During the Middle Ages, in much of Britain, farming was typically practiced in open fields involving the common grazing of 'waste' land. This system declined over the course of the eighteenth century as fields defined by hedgerows and stone walls came to distinguish properties and protect crops from livestock. The Parliamentary Enclosures of 1780 and 1820 and the impetus given to cereal production by the Corn Laws furthered this trend. Consequently, much of the Cotswolds and the Yorkshire Wolds were partitioned into separate farm holdings and small fields, now largely characteristic of these districts (Ratcliffe 1984: 79). The social and environmental dimensions of Constable's paintings have been much studied and demonstrate similar twinned processes of landscape transformation and idealisation (Rosenthal 1983; Reynolds 1965). His carefully framed views of the Stour Valley in Suffolk – of 'the placid river with its locks and barges, great overhanging trees, and distant water-meadows

beneath massive cloudy skies’ (Helsing 1989: 253) – have been interpreted for their nationalistic overtones. These are noteworthy given the continuing popularity of English rural scenery and its association with English heritage.

The connection formed between rural scenery and rural people was a key ingredient in the Victorian imagining of place. Today we might describe either Walter Scott’s stories about the Highlands or Constable’s paintings as each representing a unique ‘habitat’, even though the term is typically reserved for environmental science. James Russell Lowell used it in 1854 to describe Cambridge, Massachusetts as he remembered it 30 years previously. In a memoir, the American Romantic poet observed that ‘if it be too much to expect men to traverse and survey themselves before they go abroad, we might certainly ask that they should be familiar with their own villages’. Lowell reasons they had best acquire this familiarity because ‘every thing is not a Thing, and all *things* are good for nothing out of their natural *habitat*’ (Lowell 2008: 45, 48).

The notoriety and seeming ubiquity of the country cottage highlight mixed perceptions of the countryside in the Victorian imagination. Cottages appear in period commentary and scholarship on the Victorian era like an elusive dream,



Figure 14.2 *The Cottage Door* by Helen Paterson Allingham
© The Print Collector/Corbis

comparable to Tennyson's wilderness and other 'modern elegiac consolations' (DeLaura 1979: 195). The cottage featured in discourses on national identity and was exported, along with the cottage garden, abroad (Maynard 2000). Late Victorian pride in rural architecture was accompanied by tears for its demise (Sayer 2000: 113, 128–29). With its founding in 1895 the National Trust in Britain became engaged in recording and preserving these rural artefacts. The Trust acquired titles to an assortment of vernacular buildings, including half-timbered cottages, a gatehouse and guild hall (Hall 2003: 345).

Monumentalising the rural landscapes of Britain were the nation's country estates and houses. Like the cottage, they were the subject of scientific improvement and shared interests in the forms, functions and aesthetics of domestic space (Kerr 1864). Much has been written about these (Stamp 1986; Girouard 1978) and little more will be added here. It is worth noting that an array of Victorian horticultural practices could be seen on country estates. The country house was a kind of laboratory and promotional billboard for these practices, allowing additional, often environmentally attuned, horticultural terms and fashions to enter the international vocabulary of gardening styles.

William Robinson was responsible for part of this repertoire. Credited with popularising 'cottage gardens' and 'herbaceous borders', he also encouraged the fashion for 'the wild garden' (Bisgrove 2008). This was a simulacrum of autochthonous nature that, in conception, hints of ecological reasoning. Robinson took pains to distinguish this approach from picturesque gardening. By creating a wild garden one sought to establish 'plants of other countries, as hardy as our hardiest wild flowers, in places where they will flourish without further care or cost' (Robinson 1870: xxxiii). Pines, for instance, appear several times in Robinson's *The Wild Garden*, described as characterising the forests of mountain districts and recommended for garden woodland where evergreens provided cover for a 'lace-work of delicate Ferns and a thousand flowers' below (Robinson 1870: 83).

The idea that agricultural and pastoral lands, cottages and country houses could be practically and aesthetically improved mingled with other views that something authentic about the countryside was lost as a result. In the second half of the nineteenth century, health reformers in Britain and America reiterated longstanding beliefs that human beings had degenerated from a state of accord with nature, in which a wholesome diet, cleanliness and vigorous physical exercise were symptomatic of an agrarian golden age. Disturbed by the seemingly artificiality of modern life, some promoted the vegetable as a part of an idealised natural environment in which 'undefiled instincts directed people's living habits' (Whorton 1978: 326). The reformer William Alcott (1853), for instance, argued that a vegetable diet and proper hygiene would bring about 'a gradual ascent to nature' through a more thorough, scientific understanding of nutrition. Nostalgia for gardens associated with old-fashioned ways and country living encouraged the mixed planting of edible and decorative species. George Eliot bemoaned the virtual extinction of such traditional gardens in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858). In these places, no border separated the flower from the kitchen garden, 'no monotony of enjoyment of one sense to the exclusion of another; but a charming paradisiacal mingling of all that was pleasant to the eye and good for food' (cited in Waters 1988: 50). Comparable reactions, whereby city dwellers sought to recapture the vigour of rural life, included

the planting of allotments and promotion of country or bush walking (Burchardt 2002; Taylor 1997). Tebbutt (2006: 1125) describes how walking in particular kinds of terrain like the moorland of north Derbyshire allowed for the exercise of ‘stoicism, hardiness and endurance which were central to late-nineteenth century ideals of manliness’.⁴

Nostalgia for country life was itself satirised. In his socialist utopia *News from Nowhere* (1891) William Morris lampoons villages exhibiting a ‘tumble down picturesque’ where there appear only ‘tokens of poverty’. Morris had his own views on what the countryside should be like in his socialist utopia, where there would be no big cities and dominating industry and where people were allowed to live with nature, democratically and in pursuit of their own pleasures.⁵ For some Victorians, the countryside was the last place to find such a life. Observing the contradictory predilections of the ‘middle class multitude’ in desiring a comfortable home and the beauties of nature, a critic writes:

Take most people for a day into the real natural scenery and they will be at no loss for well-known epithets expressive of admiration. Leave them there, however, for a few days, and admiration will yield to weariness. There can be no genuine love here. Love of change, excitement, novelty, will make even mountains delightful, but custom makes them detestable.

(*Daily News* 9 July 1869; cited in Sayer 2000: 173)

In a subsequent account of the ‘usually lethargic’ village of Stonington in ‘sleepy Sussex’ circulated in the colonial or Commonwealth press, similar sentiments were expressed. The story tells how the ancient village curfew bell was silenced on the orders of the parish rector, who saw it as an unwelcome annoyance and, consequently, a medical problem; by contrast ‘[t]he parishioners deny that the bell gave any annoyance, [but rather] “relieved the drab monotony of rural existence”’ (*The Advertiser* [Adelaide, SA], 5 September 1904: 4).

CONCLUSION: CHANGEFULNESS AND THE VICTORIAN WORLD

Nature may have shaped nineteenth-century society, but its influence was uncertain and sometimes contradictory. The environment and environmentality became important partly because they identified a context for thinking about natural phenomena that allowed for uncertainty, contradiction and change. The environment helped provide what Thomas Huxley sought for natural science: ‘unity in diversity’ (Block 1986: 363). Smoke stacks and their lurid light, rural improvements, even Australian bush fires, all spoke of change, if not always of the kind promising progress and social reform. Indeed, as Sayer writes: ‘the imaginary “unspoiled” countryside [was] mobilised to resist actual, material change – usually termed “progress”’ (Sayer 2000: 193). In the urban and domestic spheres, awareness of change was shaped by belief in scientific certainty and the rule of natural laws. Science thus promised both a constant, certain and reassuring world, and a means of identifying, manipulating and managing dynamic phenomena.

Different literary genres, including practical manuals like *Cassell's Household Guide* and fictional narratives, illustrated a kind of temporal awareness called 'uniformitarianism' amongst other abstract understandings of nature. Evident in novels as well as geology and other natural sciences, it called on the 'the idea that all events can be explained causally, and by causes now in operation, and that extremes are to be regarded as the consequence of the gradual accumulation of the ordinary' (Levine 1988: 15). Additional lessons associated with environmentality called upon evolutionary reasoning and the concept of adaptability. For the scientist, the principle of adaptation emphasised relations between living beings and encouraged speculation on just how each organic or inorganic entity fit into an overall picture. For the *Cassell's* reader, an idealised householder or homemaker, adaptation meant recognising chemical and other processes and then acquiring disciplines to accommodate themselves to this dynamic reality. Belief that living beings adapt themselves to unique environs or perish, meant that life was caught up in a continuum in which 'everything is always or potentially changing and that nothing can be understood without its history' (ibid.: 16, 43-47).

Historical understanding, whether based on an accurate record of the past or nostalgia, was partly behind the instances of rural 'dissent'. Representations of disappearing country cottages or concerns for lost ways of living in them do not make for environmental activism. However, the grounds for it are signposted in period commentary. One can discern additional signs for what George Perkins Marsh described as 'the dangers of imprudence and the necessity of caution in all operations which, on a large scale, interfere with the spontaneous arrangements of the organic or the inorganic world' (Marsh 1864: 3).

Like the Scottish clearances, much has been written on the land enclosures in England and Wales and their lingering environmental, social and political consequences for Victorian rural society (Richards 2007; Turner 1984; Thompson 1963). These impacts provide a window for observing the multiple transformations set in motion by a parliamentary act. They also highlight resistance to the broader imperative to imagine and make the environment into something 'else' – something more certain and governable, more productive or socially beneficial. The enclosure of commons sparked debate amongst the Victorians over the countryside and the freedoms that should be exercised by rural inhabitants (Cook 1846; Alcock 1845). Infractions of laws curtailing rights and forms of civil disobedience provide additional evidence of contention. Of the forms of rural crime reported in nineteenth-century Britain, poaching occupied a major share of magistrates' time along with theft, trespass, vagrancy and Poor Law offences. For Jones (1979: 825), the figure of the poacher 'tells us a good deal about the secret world of the village and the labourer'. Country walking may appear like an innocent activity compared to the gravity of enclosures and arrests for poaching or rick-burning and cattle-maiming (Dunbabin 1974). However, the creation of Victorian ramblers clubs and their efforts to protect access to fields and pastures can be related to broader debates over rural entitlements. The Labour party politician George Herbert Ward was one of a number of walkers' rights activists. He did much to shape public awareness of age-old footpaths in Derbyshire and the need for their preservation. Simultaneously, Ward's careful topographical descriptions of these paths suggested 'a powerful sense of place' (Tebbutt 2006: 1130).

Other indicators of environmental activism are evident in the historical record. Arguments over water rights predate the Victorian era, as the history of riparian law reveals. In environmental terms, the supply of water was not only the 'first urban problem', but also a resource for emerging forms of 'green' politics. England's Lake District was readily idealised (Woof 1984), though nostalgia may have played a progressive role in the battle against appropriation of its water supply for Victorian Manchester (Ritvo 2009). The spread of Anglophone settler societies provided additional opportunities and settings for cultivating environmentally directed activism. Bonyhady, for instance, challenges perceptions that Australia's settler society was completely ignorant or largely uncaring of its impact on the continent's indigenous people and landscapes. He argues for a more balanced view, citing historical instances where settlers became attached to and protective of their new environment:

The breadth of this culture of environmental concern – embracing both the 'sentimental' and the practical – has profound implications for how we see Australian history. The settler's own language in the second half of the nineteenth century is most indicative. As they increasingly put it, their new environment was a 'heritage', if not 'national estate.'

(Bonyhady 2000: 9)

Questions remain. Do views entailing the play of changefulness and environment describe a uniquely Victorian world? Yes, to some extent, inasmuch as they provide details of a context for self-understanding and cultural recognition for participants in Belich's Anglophone explosion. Belief in the organic contiguity of the nature in nineteenth-century Europe drew the attention of the religious and the empiricist, the scientist and the novelist, the urban householder and rural resident, to the divisions between species and the environs they inhabited. Observations led to awareness that all manner of living beings exist in a state of flux. It led to awareness that chronology of some kind was required to understand how they got there and where they might go. Carried over into the social and political arena, environmental reasoning along these lines contributed to the dynamism of the Victorian era. The awareness of change made it possible for Victorians to think about themselves as not only members of the human species, but also as a distinctive population exhibiting an energy, hardiness and resourcefulness who recognised – and were obliged to face – manifestations of transience in their lives. Nineteenth-century fact and fiction (and prejudice) came to be supported by speculation on differences in mental capacity and temperament among various peoples. These could be traced to particular environmental circumstances of birthplace or an innate ability to transform nature to suit progressive ideals. According to this reasoning, a people's constitution was a measure of adaptability. Adaptability imparted a greater significance to a community's times and environs than the Empedoclean philosophy of nature's fundamental elements or views presupposing God's master plan that prevailed in previous eras. Surroundings could prove as influential in the past and future as they were in the present.

Balfour, the natural theologian, and Darwin, the evolutionist, articulate in different ways the pervasiveness and inevitability of change in nature. One can

speculate further on how the reverse condition seems to prefigure aspects of thinking on the ‘Victorian world’, its chronological boundaries and meaning. Histories of the Victorian era commonly elicit (indeed, they seem to require) the changefulness of the period (Price 1999). Patterns of ‘visuality, building and representation’ outlined here may also partly account for scholarly concerns to characterise the Victorian era more accurately, to identify its limits precisely, or jettison the periodisation entirely. In other words, just as the Victorians commonly saw themselves living in a distinctive world, shaped by dynamic times and places, academics who study the Victorian period most likely share similar expectations. This tendency represents a kind of uniformitarianism itself. By perhaps recognising the date of an invention along with citing the establishment of a constitution or founding of an institution, the specialist reinforces the temporal and cultural boundaries of a world the Victorians themselves first recognised and were empowered by.

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NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Price (1990) and in response, Hewitt (2006).
- 2 The concept is comparable, and allied to the historical phenomenon of ‘governmentality’ described by Burchell *et al.* (1991) to explain the rationalities involved in modern social formations, governance and politics.
- 3 Though union with England in 1707 served to depress the Scottish economy by creating direct competition with England, the university at Edinburgh became increasingly instrumental in applying science to the improvement of Scottish agriculture and industry, providing a source of ideas that were carried south and overseas (Russell 1983: 91, 94).
- 4 Malcolmson (1981: 614) observes the contrast between town and country manifest by rural leisure activities like fairs and other communal celebrations, parish festivities and local sporting events. He argues these traditional activities were subsumed by ‘an increasingly ascendant urban culture’, so the trappings of that culture (like ‘football clubs, music-hall songs, railway excursions, popular newspapers’) became evident ‘almost everywhere’.
- 5 For Morris, with his interests in the Gothic and medieval revival, and other reformers, the rural idyll was partly a ‘search for a pre-industrial world in which nature was unspoilt’ (James 1981: 160–61).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WAS THERE A VICTORIAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION?

—♦—
Alison Mackinnon

In effect, the demographic transition is associated with redrawing the major axes of patriarchal relations.

(Miller 1998: 253)

In 1899 Rosamond Benham, a young Australian medical student, published a poem that celebrated passionate female desire and lamented the sexual double standard of the times (Mackinnon 1986: 76). The poem read, in part:

How could you, Love, accuse me in such wise.
That I was cold and loved myself the best!
When all my life was leaping toward your eyes
And all my body ached to be caressed
By your strong hands and supple clinging mouth.
O hot fierce fire that needs must be denied!

The tension between sexual desire and the need for restraint, so evident here, continued as a major theme in Benham's writing, both in her poetry and in her book, written after her graduation, *Sense about Sex / By a Woman Doctor* (Benham 1905). Here she laid out her decidedly radical views on marriage, divorce, family limitation and the need to acknowledge female sexual desire. Her work used language that many deemed unseemly in a woman, immoral even, language that signalled the beginnings of a new sense of self, a new female subjectivity.

Benham was a New Woman, highly educated and progressive, a type that can be seen as encapsulating both the hopes and anxieties of the end of the Victorian age. The hopes were those of the countless women and many progressive men throughout the English-speaking world and beyond who saw women's education and emancipation as the beginning of a new dawn. They envisaged a more equal partnership between men and women, more companionate marriage and a smaller number of healthy, wanted children. The fears, however, were legion. Established religion, respectable society, most of the medical profession, social and political

commentators feared that if women were to be emancipated socially or sexually, society as they knew it would collapse. Those women who brought new vocabularies into being, who spoke of sexual desire and an intimate knowledge of the body, who wished to enter ‘male’ professions, transgressed the dominant norms of respectable Victorian women. Patriarchal dominance would be challenged and, frighteningly, the numbers of children born would be radically reduced. Many feared that the family would be changed forever.

In fact, already fewer babies were being born in English-speaking countries. Those widespread anxieties led to a range of inquiries into the declining birthrate in the early years of the twentieth century. One of the earliest, which perhaps best illustrates the concerns of the time, was the 1903 New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate and the Mortality of Infants (Hicks 1978). In their report, the New South Wales Royal Commissioners stated that the reduction in fertility was due to contraception and abortion and ‘pathological causes consequent upon both practices’. According to the report, the motives for family limitation usually were:

- 1 an unwillingness to submit to the strain and worry of children;
- 2 a dislike of the interference with pleasure and comfort involved in child-bearing and child-rearing;
- 3 a desire to avoid the actual physical discomfort of gestation, parturition and lactation; and
- 4 a love of luxury and of social pleasures, which is increasing.

All four reasons, the report suggested, ‘have one element in common, namely selfishness. They are, in fact, indicative of the desire of the individual to avoid his [sic] obligations to the community’.

In many ways the commissioners’ thinking paralleled that of Rosamond Benham – many women were questioning the reproductive options open to them, as we shall see, challenging the need for constant child bearing, indeed limiting their families. But whereas the Royal Commissioners blamed women’s selfishness for this change, women such as Benham argued that they were seeking more control over their bodies for selfless reasons, and that concern for their families was uppermost. Far from selfishness, their new consciousness involved the desire to enhance the life chances of their precious children. A smaller number of well cared for children was increasingly their goal. And in other ways their subjectivities were changing: the meaning attributed to motherhood and to women’s place in the world was undergoing transformation. Some wished to reclaim a sexual self. Their very vocabularies were different. Such opposing perspectives on the reasons for changing behaviour underlie the complex debates surrounding the Victorian fertility decline. They illuminate the real anxieties behind the ‘falling birthrate’: the fact that society was changing in ways that no one seemed able to control.

The Royal Commissioners, whose report was noted with interest by British contemporaries (Woods 2000), were correct in their belief that the birth rate was falling. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the birth rate plummeted across the Western world and, as the Royal Commission correctly surmised, the decline was largely the result of family limitation inside marriage. In England

the marriage cohort of 1860–69 had an average of 6.16 children; the 1890–99 cohort had 4.13; and the 1920–24 cohort had 2.31 children. In Australia the birth rate fell from the 1860s to the 1930s when the lowest rate of 16.4 live births per thousand of the population was recorded, and the average completed family size dropped from over seven in the 1860s to 2.43 by 1954. It was a similar story in Canada. As Prentice *et al.* point out '[w]hereas in 1851 a woman who had come to the end of her child bearing years on average would have born 7.02 children, by 1921 the average had dropped to 3.54' (Prentice *et al.* 1988: 163). The control of fertility within marriage by spacing births or by delaying marriage was complemented by family limitation or 'stopping' before the end of the reproductive period (Miller 1998). This demographic transition as it is termed is one of the fundamental changes of modern times, reshaping families and altering women's life course in immeasurable ways. What were its major dimensions and how had it come about?

In his definitive account of Victorian demography in England and Wales, Robert Woods outlined the shape of major population change over the Victorian period with particular attention to the key aspects of nuptiality (numbers marrying and age at marriage), fertility and mortality. He noted that during the Victorian period the population of England and Wales grew from 16 to 36 million (Woods 2000: 400). Life expectancy rose from the age of around 40 at the beginning of the period to 50 at the end, as mortality declined due to fewer epidemics, public health interventions and an increased standard of living. Infant mortality, however, changed little over the period, although childhood mortality began its slow decline. The fertility rate that peaked at 5.75 children early in the nineteenth century had fallen to around 3.5 by 1901 and continued to fall thereafter, as we have seen (Woods 2000: 7). As Woods suggests: 'Clearly the Victorian era was above all one of demographic change in which the secular declines of both mortality and fertility began, and by 1901 new, lower than previously experienced levels had been reached' (Woods 2000: 5). Furthermore, Woods locates the English and Welsh 'demographic revolution' as occurring during the second half of the nineteenth century, and as 'epitomized by the joint processes of family limitation and reduced childhood mortality' (Woods 2000: 405). Such major changes in population size and behaviour invited explanation, now as then. As well as the Australian Royal Commissioners, a number of demographers, sociologists and social historians have addressed the issues in the decades since the early twentieth century. Their explanations include classical 'demographic transition theory' and economic and social change; the transformations of medicine and public health and, more recently, explanations from women's historians. The latter highlight the impact of better education and paid work for women in changing marriage patterns and encouraging falling fertility.

If, as Woods surmises, family limitation is one of the key mechanisms of that vast change in population patterns, then we need to consider its dimensions. Falling fertility had not been encouraged by Victoria. On the contrary the idea of 'selfish' women limiting their families was anathema to the queen, whose grand reign had recently come to an end. Mother of her people, mother of nine children, devoted wife and widow, Victoria had no truck with any notion of women's rights, while

paradoxically holding the highest office in the land. In this chapter I ask how those major changes and challenges came about in her reign. I look at the idea of ‘the Victorian family’ in both myth and fact (inasmuch as the latter can be ascertained). I consider perspectives from the statisticians who mapped the demographic changes during the nineteenth century and those who do so a century later. I also draw upon opinions from family history, from women’s history and from literary scholars who chart the changing lives and subjectivities, the remaking of mentalities, of those who inhabited that long and fateful Victorian reign. Sometimes those differing perspectives complement each other. At other times they describe such totally different worlds that they are unrecognizable to each other. They are different ‘modes of representation’, which inform in different ways ‘what we can know’ (Poovey 1998: xv).

Was there a Victorian demographic transition? Such a formulation is too narrow. Certainly there were major changes in society and culture that, in Pavla Miller’s terms, redrew the major axes of patriarchal relations in the West (Miller 1998: 253). In the process of this vast remapping, fuelled by a changing mode of production from agriculture to industrialization, patterns of gender relations, child bearing and child rearing changed substantially. These changes resulted in a major reshaping of personal life, of the subjectivities of men and women and the relations between them, and the development of what some have deemed new technologies of the self. New relationships between adults and children and families and public life came to be accepted to the extent that new demographic regimes came into being, new family forms, creating the vast shift that demographers have called ‘the demographic transition’. The shape of those new regimes only gradually became clear and took many decades to complete. Demographer John C. Caldwell (1999) has argued that what is surprising about fertility decline in Britain is not that it happened but that it took so long to happen. Could this have been in part due to the distinctive Victorian morality, which celebrated female submission and domesticity, which emphasized silences, evasions and passionlessness, a model represented publicly by Queen Victoria, although her private behaviour appears to have been quite the opposite (Marsden 2010)? This suggests that ideas and indeed ideologies were also an important aspect of demographic change.

Rapid population growth and the development of the market economy, combined with increasing urbanization in the first half of the nineteenth century in Britain, called for systematic investigation of the changing population. Future demographers and statisticians gained valuable resources in this period. As Sheard observes: ‘The introduction of civil registration in 1837, together with the decennial census and increasingly more sophisticated nosologies, meant that the state now had detailed information on where and how the population was living’ (Sheard 2002: para 2). Yet in spite of these resources it was, and still is, not an easy matter to describe the vast shift from the early nineteenth century, a period characterized by high fertility and high mortality, and a ‘capricious pattern of births and deaths’, to the end of the century, where low fertility and low mortality was rapidly becoming the dominant pattern. Demographers have devoted much time and energy to constructing elegant explanatory models, generally referred to under the rubric of ‘demographic transition theory’ (see for instance Caldwell 2004). Their attempt

to construct an overarching demographic model has been challenged by historians and cultural anthropologists alike: they seek more nuanced accounts and reject overarching grand explanations for such complex phenomena.

THE PERCEIVED RELATIVE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF CHILDREN

When Victoria came to the throne the largely pre-industrial Anglophone world required a very specific household economy. For most families working in agriculture or the home-based settings of the early industrial revolution, the family economy was paramount. Everyone contributed under the patriarchal eye of the family head. It was a time, in Caldwell's terms, 'when births and deaths [were] essentially capricious' (Jones *et al.* 1997: 16), when apart from a few early exceptions most people assumed that there was little one could do to plan or prevent the bringing of children into the world. Children were highly valued as from an early age they could find work and add to the family coffers. Thus while the costs of having children were considerable, particularly to the health of the mother, the benefits to the labouring family were much higher. It is this perceived cost-benefit equation, expressed in very different languages – and subject to ongoing debate – that both demographers and historians see as critical to major shifts in family formation and later fertility decline. Over the period of Victoria's reign, children came to require ever more resources for their upkeep, to be ever more highly valued and mothers increasingly saw their children's development as their major life task.

Whether they are arguing from an economic perspective, through a strictly demographic lens, or from the far wider angle of the social and cultural historians, most agree that it was the issue of the perceived changing 'value' of children that eventually shifted the tendency for most families to limit the number of children. Yet along with those changing views of childhood was an equally significant shift in attitudes to women.

One of the central arguments used by demographers and historians alike to explain the changes in family shape and size lies in that changing balance of the perceived costs and benefits of children, or 'the reversal of wealth flows' within households in demographer John Caldwell's terms (Szreter 1996: 36). With the term 'wealth' Caldwell included not only income, property, goods and services but also benefits such as deference and prestige accruing to patriarchal family heads (Caldwell 1976). He argued that fertility behaviour in both pre-transitional and post-transitional societies was economically rational, asserting that there is a great divide – 'a point where the compass hesitatingly swings around 180 degrees' (cited in Miller 1998: 253) – in the history of fertility. The logic of the family economy encouraged high fertility before the divide, but afterwards it favoured low fertility. The key to the change is the net flow of resources within the family. Before the divide the net flow of wealth was towards the male household head in what he described as a 'familial mode of production', which rests on the male's exploitation of women and children's labour, making high fertility rational as in the case of proto-industrial families. After the divide the net flow of wealth changed direction, flowing towards the children and making low fertility economically rational (Caldwell 1976).

In spite of the language (cost–benefits, wealth flows) Caldwell’s argument does not rest on economic determinism alone: his work was influenced by anthropology and culture. He recognized that the pre-transitional family survived the early period of capitalist development in a two-tiered system whereby a capitalist economy, and a pre-capitalist family supporting high fertility, co-existed until the traditional family morality and culture was irrevocably changed. Importantly, he argued that mass education dissolved this traditional familial culture (Caldwell 1976). While Caldwell’s theories are remarkably broad and generative in a demographic context, historians offer an even more nuanced version of this narrative. Simon Szreter, for example, has shown definitively that, while the broad outline of Caldwell’s thesis may be useful, the overall timing of changes in labour markets and fertility differed radically for different working-class segments such as textile workers and miners throughout Britain. And it was legislation such as the *Factory and Workshops Act* of 1878 as well as the *Education Acts* from 1870 to 1880 that clearly increased the costs of children by limiting their factory work and insisting on their school attendance while at the same time making it more economically rational for their mothers to enter paid labour (Szreter 1996: 490–92). As children’s labour-market participation declined, the belief that parents should support their children grew, altering in subtle ways the relations and power between parents and children.

MASS EDUCATION: AN ENGINE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Mass elementary schooling was a critical component of change for children, particularly working-class children, taking them out of factories and off the streets, and defining them as dependents, although this process took many decades to achieve. This transformation was crucial to the reshaping of relations between children and parents, another of the broad axes of change to patriarchal relations in the era. While acknowledging the economic impact of mass schooling through decreased child labour and increased consumption, Caldwell (1980) argued further that the cultural influence of education was most important. Education identified the child as a future, not a present, worker; it imposed middle-class values on working-class families and stressed universal values, not the particularistic ones of the family. As the cost of having children soared, parents begrudgingly gave them up to the new state school systems, whose teachings liberated them from the superstition and exploitation of their parents.

Mark Stern has tested Caldwell’s argument in a detailed analysis of Erie County in New York State between 1850 and 1920 (Stern 1987). Stern agrees with Caldwell that education was important, but not because it emancipated children from the exploitation of their parents, or changed their values. Rather, he suggests, working-class families used education to adapt to changes in the American labour market at the turn of the century. Not surprisingly, he discovers that ‘the new class’ of professionals and white collar workers were the first group to practise family limitation, followed by the ‘old business class’ of merchants, manufacturers and the skilled workers in the early years of the twentieth century, with the families of unskilled labourers being the last to make the transition to the small family regime. The explanation, he argues, lies in the changing family economies and class



Figure 15.1 ‘State School East Adelaide – children grouped outside’, c. 1900s. GNo3247 from glass negative Collection of History SA. Permission History SA (South Australia). Educating girls and boys together (if apart) in elementary schools began to reshape relations between the sexes

structure in a society being transformed by the growth of corporate capitalism, where shifts in opportunity altered the logic of family formation.

The inclusion of girls in state elementary school systems throughout the English-speaking world had significant and unintended effects on their lives. It contributed to the redrawing of another axis of patriarchal relations: that between the sexes. Educating girls in a manner similar to their brothers could unsettle fixed notions of sexual and mental difference. One Australian study, which linked years of elementary education with ultimate fertility levels for a particular set of girls, claimed that changing values and norms, in part promoted by compulsory education for girls, helped to shape an early pattern of fertility decline in nineteenth-century South Australia (Mackinnon, Batson and Peterson-Grey 2007). Schooling for girls contributed to that broad unravelling of gender norms, of the taken-for-granted nature of immersion in family, of constant child bearing. In South Australian elementary schools where girls spent increasing numbers of years they could be treated the same way as boys, albeit within the standards of their day. Within school systems some social norms could be impartially applied. Girls could spend long periods out of the household, begin to see themselves as individuals, be taught by independent women teachers and envisage, briefly, a time of their own independence in the labour market. Within the context of changing social and economic circumstances, young women, beneficiaries of compulsory schooling and new work

opportunities, began to refuse a life of constant child bearing. They could ‘re-imagine’ themselves . . . and their ability to shape their social worlds, worlds that included their perceptions of themselves as social actors as well as reproducers (Mackinnon *et al.* 2007: 231–32). But we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves here. What were the norms that schooling could subvert?

WOMEN’S CHANGING ROLE: THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY

It is useful at this point to turn from the changing economy and its associated institutions to the equally significant issue of what Mary Poovey (1988) has called the symbolic economy. Here the focus falls on the middle and emerging professional classes. While women were assumed to be workers in both agricultural and early industrial settings, the growth of industry and increasing wealth enabled many middle-class men to withdraw their wives from the labour market and support them in a life of domesticity. A non-working, dependent wife came to be seen as ‘one of the fixed points of middle-class status’ (Davidoff and Hall 1987: 275). This indeed became the hallmark of middle-class respectability, of bourgeois power. Mary Poovey argued that ‘middle class Victorians at mid century organized difference in a binary opposition and . . . they mapped this opposition onto the “natural” difference between men and women’, ‘rather than a hierarchically ordered range of similarities’ (Poovey 1988: 199, 6). By so doing they idealized the home, made women its occupants and the bearers of morality, and shaped the oppositional gender relations of the era. The ideology, or ‘set of beliefs’, in Poovey’s terms, about gender difference gave concrete form to the practices and social institutions governing people’s social relations.

A central plank of the ideology was the definition of women as mothers, their desire manifest as maternal rather than as sexual. Women’s maternal instincts fitted them perfectly not only for motherhood but for related nurturing activities, such as teaching the young and caring for the sick and infirm. They were to be firmly embedded in marriage and child rearing. Furthermore, their maternal nature unsuited them to public life in any form, as their tender affections overrode any rationality they might possess. If woman represented body then man was mind. This binary model underpinned the arguments of a wide range of social actors and commentators, from the clergy through to medical men and political thinkers. It came to be known as the idea of separate spheres, a notion that has not entirely disappeared to this day. Women’s central moral and emotional home was the family. As the nineteenth century progressed, better transport and communications (the telegraph, photography, for example) enabled families to broaden and deepen their connections, making the family not only a vital business connector as it had been since the beginnings of the industrial revolution (Davidoff and Hall 1987), but even more a central emotional element of middle-class life. Women were to be equal – within their own sphere – and morally superior to men. Yet, paradoxically, married women were legally subsumed into the persons of their husbands and economically dependent.

However, as Poovey illustrated (1988) and others argue (Davidoff *et al.* 1999), these binary oppositions contained the seeds of their own destruction. What was

the situation for women who did not marry and did not therefore have the means to employ their maternal instincts? Within some settler societies such as Australia and Canada, wives continued to contribute to family economies in a world that could not really afford the leisured wife of the English upper classes and lacked the domestic staff of Victorian England. In Australia, for instance, historian Patricia Grimshaw (1979) observed that the Australian family was 'born modern', relatively unencumbered by kinship and community. Such an observation was no doubt true of many settler societies such as New Zealand and Canada and of the western frontier states of the US. Not all women could live within the terms of the domestic ideal: and the terms themselves could be readily contested. The separation of home and work and the accompanying elevation of domestic life into an ideal was unrealistic due to demographic factors. The case of 'redundant women' in Britain makes this clear. The 1851 census claimed alarmingly that 42 per cent of women between the ages of 20 and 40 were unmarried, and furthermore that two million out of Britain's six million women were self-supporting (Poovey 1988: 4). The case of unmarried women – or redundant women as they were cruelly labelled – caused some male commentators to despair and to suggest 'solutions', such as immigration to the colonies to restore the balance (Poovey 1988: 1–5). Women concerned about the situation of their unmarried sisters, on the other hand, argued that there was a strong case to educate women so that they could earn their own living and avoid unfortunate dependence on male relatives. Occupations for middle-class women were extremely limited, with teaching and governessing virtually the only options. In Great Britain in 1861 the percentage of the female labour force in various economic sectors was as follows: 45 per cent in manufacturing (including textiles and garment manufacture), 40 per cent in domestic service, 8 per cent in agriculture and 7 per cent in 'other' (Tilly and Scott 1978). The size of the last category, which included the options for middle-class women, graphically illustrates the need to open up new opportunities.

This was a good reason to expand women's education from a domestically based, accomplishments curriculum suited to wives and mothers, towards a systematic course of study with more utility in the marketplace, a case that was consistently argued in Britain and in the British settler societies from the 1850s and 1860s (Caine 1992; Dyhouse 1981; Mackinnon 1986; Prentice *et al.* 1988). Similarly, some women entered the public sphere as standard bearers for their sex, confounding the idea of separate spheres. Thus women cannily sought greater freedom, deploying the idea of their greater moral strength to their advantage.

The equation of morality with the domestic ideal meant that those women who worked outside a family setting in factories and in manual work were frequently viewed as immoral, or potentially immoral. Here was a dilemma even for middle-class women such as governesses: expected to be like mothers, indeed substitutes for mothers, they were nevertheless in paid employment, emblematic of the fact that not all women could become mothers, and a reminder of the ease with which they could be viewed as dangerously conflating paid work with moral – indeed sexual – danger. This point was clearly brought home in the fictional character of Jane Eyre.

It was not just the question of redundant women that occupied the journals and opinion makers of mid-Victorian society, but the wider 'woman question' itself.

This question became increasingly urgent in the latter part of the century. Were women persons under the law? How were women to be educated? What positions should be open to middle-class women whose male relatives could not support them? At the same time as children came to be increasingly the focus of family life, how many offspring could a young professional family respectably support? These questions were debated throughout the English-speaking world (Macdonald 2006; Prentice *et al.* 1988). As Caldwell argued, ‘without this ferment of ideas, the onset of the fertility transition in the West would not have passed so quickly from the urban rich to the urban poor and on to the rural populations, groups with very different economic challenges’ (Jones *et al.* 1997: 20).

BIRTH CONTROL OR ‘A CULTURE OF ABSTINENCE’?

Robert Woods reflects that ‘the factors controlling effective fertility will hold the key to an understanding of any historical society’s demographic regime’ (Woods 2000: 390). Let us look further then at the discussions around fertility decline and the means by which it came about. The debates around birth control and sexuality in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were more important in reshaping relations between the sexes than in any direct effect on actual reproductive practices. Certainly they ‘put into discourse’ the fact that some people were questioning fatalistic approaches to child bearing, that the issue of women’s health and infant well being were matters of considerable public concern. They offered for some a language in which to discuss such previously taboo subjects. They may have made it possible in some homes at least for men and women to discuss issues of family size and planning. Yet it seems that the means by which people achieved smaller families was an age-old one, the ‘preventive check’ of Malthus – that is a prudential approach to sexual conduct, delaying marriage and/or applying such well-worn techniques as partial abstinence and withdrawal (*coitus interruptus*) within marriage. This was, at least for the middle and professional classes in Anglophone countries, in keeping with the ideas of restraint, thrift and planning, indeed of the beginnings of the modernization of the family, the ‘disenchantment of the home’ in Kerreen Reiger’s (1984) apt description. Szreter wrote of a ‘culture of abstinence’ (1996: [Chapter 8](#)), one that had typified relations between young people in Britain before marriage but was extended logically to a period within marriage.

While few radical women writers were prepared to sanction birth control and indeed free love (Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy was a notable example) (Hall 2000: 58–59) most women opposed birth control on the grounds that it would remove power from women rather than enhance it. Hera Cook, historian of ‘reproductive sexuality’, has pointed out that

for many, though certainly not all, late nineteenth century to interwar period English women sexuality was merely a series of acts, or perhaps a stage of life which they passed through quickly. For these women, the core of their being, the way they constituted and recognized themselves, and the way their society did so also, was through their identity as mothers. Frequently, they interacted largely with other women and obtained a diffuse sensual and emotional

gratification from contact with their children. Many judged engagement in sexual activity and relationships carefully in order that they should make this life as a mother with their own household possible.

(Cook 2007: 920)

Sexuality and reproduction were fraught matters, not to be spoken of by the delicate women of the middle class, until campaigns such as those led by Josephine Butler against the *Contagious Diseases Acts* in the 1860s and other challengers to the links between prostitution and Victorian marriage, such as Frances Power Cobbe, ‘put into discourse’ (Foucault 1976) the unsatisfactory state of Victorian sexual relations for women (Caine 1992). Increasingly the spotlight fell on the vast army of prostitutes whose work helped maintain the ‘purity’ of the Victorian home. The 1870s, almost the mid point of Victoria’s reign, proved a major turning point in relation to these debates. While fertility amongst the well-to-do was beginning to decline at this point, public discussion of birth control was taboo – intensely rejected by both clergy and the medical profession (Hall 2000: 27–29). In 1877, free thinker Charles Bradlaugh and his colleague Annie Besant produced a cheap edition of a birth control tract, Charles Knowlton’s *Fruits of Philosophy*, as a test case. The resultant trial, well covered by the popular press, and a similar court case in Australia in 1888, ensured that the issue of birth control was brought vociferously to public notice. While Malthusian ideas about the need for a preventive check to avoid an ever-swelling population were not new, they gained an extra impetus with the formation of the Malthusian League in 1877 in Britain. Such a league was not unique to Britain. By century’s end there were branches in many countries. Several of the European and American neo-Malthusian movements linked forces in August 1900 in Paris, when the first International Neo-Malthusian Conference was held, and the *International Federation of Human Regeneration* was created (Masjuan and Martinez-Alier 2004).

As public discussion on this topic ensued and, at the same time, first-wave feminism grew in size and influence, another axis of patriarchal control slowly shifted. Feminists did not necessarily support the notion of birth control, as we have seen. However, in the course of this debate many English and colonial women came to recognize and insist on their right to sexual agency. That often included the rejection of sexual activity (Cook 2007).

Whether one looks to explanations for the fertility decline from the 1870s in the more open discussions of birth control and changing relations between the sexes, or in its more measurable aspects such as declining child and infant mortality, a sense of overarching complexity prevails. Even within the areas where measurement was possible explanations are not straightforward. Let us consider the question of infant mortality. It is generally accepted that marital fertility began to decline in the Anglophone world from the 1870s. Was this in some way a reaction to falling infant and childhood mortality? This appears to be a logical aspect of timing from the perspective of demographic transition theory (falling infant mortality therefore falling fertility), but the untidy ‘facts’ of the history of infant mortality make that link difficult to establish. It has been assumed, using national level figures, that infant mortality in England was stable at a level of 150 infant deaths per 1,000 live births for much of the second half of the nineteenth century.

There was a slight rise at the very end of the nineteenth century (mainly attributed to a series of very hot summers and a rise in deaths from diarrhoeal diseases, particularly in urban areas), followed by a steeper decline from the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet recent work that takes geographical variation into account argues that the experience of urban centres was not typical, that in fact some communities in rural England were experiencing the beginnings of a decline in infant deaths from the mid-nineteenth century (Williams and Galley 1995). It may be possible to see a direct link between falling infant mortality and marital fertility, but it is a difficult connection to prove. Here again it seems there is not one infant mortality decline but a series of local declines linked to many factors. Yet overall childhood mortality was declining by the turn of the century and importantly, as science came up with some solutions – vaccinations, clean water, better hygiene – a fatalistic acceptance of infant and childhood mortality was shifting.

The will to limit families, and the sense that it was possible, preceded any general use of new birth control methods. Wally Seccombe (1990) noted that working-class women – often with their husbands’ help – started to limit their families long before they had access to artificial forms of contraception – through abstinence, withdrawal and abortion – in order to protect the health of the mother and to manage the family economy. Such practices were not limited to Britain. In this period Canadian women, for example, were also using a range of strategies to limit their families (Prentice *et al.* 1988: 164). These included delayed marriage, *coitus interruptus* and abstinence. But Canadian women, like Australian women of that time, were also aware of a wide range of birth control devices such as pessaries. It is not clear that the ‘culture of abstinence’ that Szreter claims for England and Wales was as pervasive in the colonies.

A VICTORIAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION?

The idea of a unitary demographic transition has been comprehensively challenged. In Britain *The Fertility of Marriage Report*, drawing upon the census of 1911, was published in two parts in 1917 and in 1923 (Szreter 1996: 3). Drawing on those reports and on the associated tables, British historian Simon Szreter rejected what he termed the unitary ‘professional’ model of the British census, one that put forward a five-step hierarchical model of social class and assumed that the top class, comprising the professional and upper middle classes, first controlled their fertility and were followed sequentially by the other four groups. In a masterful analysis Szreter cast doubt on a single unitary model of fertility decline in Britain, claiming that ‘[p]ractices of family formation in fact changed in a variety of ways and according to divergent chronologies under all the varied cultural, political and economic conditions prevailing in the scores of different communities all over the country’ (Szreter 1996: 366). In fact, Szreter argued, ‘there were many distinct fertility and nuptiality regimes changing alongside each other in England and Wales’ (Szreter 1996: 2). He disputed any notion of the imposition of bourgeois schemes and behaviours on the working class. Historical sociologist Pavla Miller also rejected the idea of the imposition of middle-class behaviour on ‘working-class victims’ (Miller 1998: 249), arguing that the agency of working-class people was

a crucial factor in their changing behaviours. These two writers, supported by a legion of others, who focus variously on the working class, on women, on specific locations, such as those of the settler colonies of British origin, emphasize the many varied aspects of change that together make up the demographic transformation.

In this chapter I have focused on the redrawing of the axes of patriarchal power. In particular I have sought to sketch in broad terms the changes that irrevocably altered relations in two of those axes: that between parents and children and between men and women in the context of the broad economic, social and cultural change illuminated throughout this volume. New institutions came into being, particularly schools in their new state-sponsored systematic forms. New subjectivities were formed with both men and women reimagining their place in society and within the household. New family strategies emerged as young couples sought the social respectability and economic security that smaller families ensured. New sexualities were emerging, and renewed demands for political and social rights. A Victorian feminist movement challenged the limitations imposed by the domestic ideal and the idea of separate spheres, while cleverly using those ideologies to unravel the worst of their constraints and maintaining what was useful. In Australia, for example, the Social Purity League formed the backbone of the fight for women's suffrage, arguing cogently for women's greater moral influence on Australian society. In the midst of this cauldron of change, fertility and mortality patterns declined for different and intricately linked reasons.

By the last years of Victoria's reign, due to the indefatigable efforts of reforming women, many of them single or 'redundant', it was possible for a small band of women to enjoy a university education and to enter professions previously barred to them. Curiously, the far-flung colonies – New Zealand, Australia and Canada – admitted women to their degrees with full entitlements well before the 'mother country' did, reflecting the looser bonds of class and entitlement of the colonies and the deliberate rejection of Anglican Tory dominance. Drawing on the authority of that education, women such as Rosamond Benham sought to reshape unsatisfactory relations between the sexes and to limit families. Born into a radical progressive family in South Australia, Benham married Thomas Gilbert Taylor, the honorary secretary of the Free Speech and Social Liberty League, a group committed to scientific social reform. Her book *Sense about Sex / By a Woman Doctor*, alluded to earlier, provides an amalgam of the most progressive, indeed radical, thinking of women of her time. In emphasizing women's sexual desire and man's need to nurture that desire she placed herself in the forefront of the rethinking of the domestic marital ideal and the power relations within it. *Sense about Sex* contained a supplement titled *Circumvention*, where Benham advocated birth control using the Victorian notion of 'vitalist physiology' and male control as the mechanism. This open discussion of such a sensitive matter was, no doubt, a step too far even for a newly admitted member to the profession, a 'woman doctor'. Benham later became the mother of two daughters and eventually divorced her free-thinking husband. Yet she did not achieve fame in her lifetime, or public honours.

The honours were heaped upon her contemporary, Dr Helen Mayo (Mackinnon 1986). Mayo, an engineer's daughter, was a pioneer in the area of infant health, who started the Mothers and Babies Association in Adelaide and helped establish a School for Mothers and an infants' ward at the Children's Hospital. Much of

her work was directed to contributing to a drop in infant mortality, and she had the great satisfaction of seeing that fall in Australia within her lifetime. In 1935 Mayo received an OBE for her work for mothers and children. Mayo believed that men and women were emotionally different and the mother alone was responsible for child rearing. While contributing to a safer world for mothers and babies, and insisting on women's 'special mission', Mayo nevertheless lived with a female partner and held important hospital and university posts (Mackinnon 1986: 60–72). As the Victorian era ended, two colonial women pointed a way forward through their words and deeds, part of the vast reshaping that underpinned the Victorian demographic transition in the Anglophone world. Their lives also revealed the many contradictions along the way.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

‘MANY LITTLE HARMLESS AND INTERESTING ADVENTURES ...’

Gender and the Victorian city



Lynda Nead

‘COWARDLY INSULTS TO LADIES’

On 7 January 1862 *The Times* published a letter from ‘Paterfamilias from the Provinces’ complaining about the insulting behaviour of men towards women on the streets of London. Explaining that he had recently moved from a large provincial town to live in London, he described how, against the advice of friends, he had allowed his daughter to go shopping with a female relative (*The Times* 7 January 1862: 7). On their return, he discovered that his trust in the safety of the city’s streets had been mistaken:

... in Oxford-street a young fellow in the garb of a gentleman kept walking before and behind them alternately for some time, and at last had the audacity to come alongside and make some observation, when the ladies took shelter in a stationer’s shop and the genteel ruffian immediately disappeared.

In some ways what is most distinctive about this narrative is its ordinariness and familiarity. Even to a reader of the twenty-first century, the nuisance or anxiety of being followed and harassed by a stranger on the city streets is a familiar experience, but what was its significance in the 1860s? How common was this kind of encounter between men and women and what can it tell us about social and cultural expectations and values around this period?¹

What is clear is that Paterfamilias’s letter hit a nerve with readers of *The Times* and the periodical press. The first to reply to ‘Paterfamilias’ was ‘Puella’, who declared that she had walked alone in Oxford Street on many occasions and had never been bothered by incivility (*The Times* 9 January 1862: 10). Perhaps the girls had invited attention by their dress, hats and demeanour; if they had adopted a more modest dress and style of behaviour, ‘Puella’ suggested, they might have escaped the attention of the strange idler. ‘Paterfamilias’ leapt to the defence of his daughter and her companion, and the doubt cast by ‘Puella’ on their behaviour. He pointed out that they had been dressed in mourning in recognition of the recent death of Prince Albert and had in no way been responsible for or incited the man’s

insulting behaviour. Over the following days further letters were published that either confirmed the experience related by 'Paterfamilias', or suggested that the girls were in some way to blame for the advances of the man. The last letter in the series offered another variation on the theme of the behaviour of women on the streets of the city: girls go out and are deliberately flirtatious and 'Paterfamilias' should come to terms with this. 'Common Sense', the assumed name of the correspondent, suggested that whilst it was true that it was impossible for young women to avoid unwanted harassment entirely, with its police and attentive shopkeepers there was no safer city in the world than London for unaccompanied women who are not looking for excitement. The correspondent then goes on to imagine the behaviour of Paterfamilias's girls:

All fathers of families are, like 'Paterfamilias from the Country', quite certain that *their* daughters are perfectly demure and well behaved, until they have conclusive proof to the contrary . . . they cannot believe that Blanche ever looked kindly at a strange *joli garçon* who appeared struck with her appearance; or that Isabel ever designedly showed rather more than her very neat ankle to a young officer crossing the street. It never occurs to them that the bonnets of the 'kiss me quick' build, loud stockings, exaggerated *tournures*, capes and crinolines; vagrant ringlets straying over the shoulder, better known as 'follow me, lads', and suchlike decoys, are all unmistakeably [*sic.*] intended to attract the notice and attention of the male sex . . . Blanche and Isabel take a good deal of notice of the young men in a quiet way when they walk out alone, and are not at all displeased of being taken notice of themselves . . . Many little harmless and interesting adventures may occur to the dear girls during their morning walks of which they say nothing at all when they return home.

(*The Times* 21 January 1862: 10)

The dispute that took form in the correspondence to *The Times* suggests that there were many different ways in which respectable men and women could inhabit the streets of the mid-Victorian city, and that respectability itself embraced a range of styles, behaviours and manners. The original incident was not a question of the blurring of identities between the respectable woman and the prostitute; the idler does not mistake the country girls for prostitutes but for naive young women who may be open to sexual flirtation. Whether the girls were categorised as victims or as instigators of the incident, and whether the man was seen to be behaving normally or abnormally, it was generally accepted by all the correspondents that girls from respectable families walk unaccompanied in Britain's major towns and cities and that this can provide the opportunity for both sought and unsought sexualised encounters with strangers.

This debate about men, women and streets in Victorian London spread to other papers and periodicals. In February 1862 the *Saturday Review* published its own response to the correspondence in an article titled 'The Rape of the Glances'. Setting the incident within the context of the 'moral geography of the West-End' and the association of Regent Street with smart daytime prostitution, it suggests that the young girls had unwittingly entered a kind of sexualised, promiscuous space:

... they innocently trip down the tabooed side of Regent-street. The natural consequence follows. A young gentleman of an amorous disposition, seeing them there, upon the equivocal ground, solitary, sauntering, and attractive, comes to the conclusion that they would rather be looked at than not, and begins to ogle them accordingly.

(*Saturday Review* 1 February 1862: 125)

The girls' moral identity is equivocal because they are 'solitary, sauntering, and attractive'. They look good and they are moving without purpose; purely for pleasure, perhaps. A *Punch* cartoon (see [Figure 16.1](#)), published at the time, pokes fun at the unattractive woman who has taken to bringing a male servant with her when out in the city in order to prevent unwanted attention. The joke, in typical *Punch* fashion, is that she does not need to bother because she is not pretty and therefore does not have occasion for the protection required by her better looking companion.²

The incident described in *The Times*, which had originally been described as involving physical proximity and speech, has in the *Saturday Review* become an entirely ocular one; it is a matter of how people appear and who has the right to look at whom. To further complicate the analysis, the article then speculates whether the girls encouraged the stranger's gaze, whether 'more than one curious and furtive glance was sent after the bold adventurer.' This has now become a complex set of interactions that converges on the London street. A naive father



PRUDENCE.

Matilda (with the hat). "WELL, DEAR, NO ONE EVER PRESUMED TO ADDRESS ME; STILL, AFTER ALL THE LETTERS IN THE PAPERS, I THINK NO GIRL OF PREPOSSESSING APPEARANCE SHOULD EVER GO OUT UNPROTECTED; SO I ALWAYS TAKE THOMPSON NOW!"

Figure 16.1 'Prudence. *Matilda (with the hat)*. "Well, dear, no one ever presumed to address me; still, after all the letters in the papers, I think no girl of prepossessing appearance should ever go out unprotected; so I always take Thompson now!"' *Punch* 1 February 1862: 44

allows his daughter and a companion to stroll along a street conventionally associated with prostitution. This connection sexualises their environment and provides a context for their encounter with a male stranger, who persistently stares at them and follows them. Furthermore, the girls may well have consciously encouraged his attentions. But after all, the writer in the *Saturday Review* points out, the offence is only that of stealing a look; there was, it suggests, no verbal or physical abuse. The article censures 'Paterfamilias' for his naivety. Perhaps he comes from a country, it wonders, 'where nobody looks at anybody' and is shocked, therefore, at 'the ocular freedom of the London streets'. The city is imagined as a place of scopific promiscuity, where the exchange of looks between men and women is constant and potent. All pedestrians are caught up in this network of gazes and interpretation. Perhaps, then, the gaze at Paterfamilias's daughter was not purloined, but exchanged freely and knowingly. If women want to escape London's web of glances, the article concludes, they must dress unattractively, walk at a steady and purposeful pace and look straight ahead. To deviate from these guidelines is to enter into the space of the city's ocular economy.

The question of how this incident is to be interpreted and what it might tell us about gendered spaces in the Victorian world draws on a body of work about the period that has developed over the last 40 years or more. The historiography of nineteenth-century gender relations and urban space is a narrative of the absence of respectable women from accounts of city space to a gradual uncovering of the ways in which men and women occupied the city streets throughout Victoria's reign. The role of women and the relationship between class, gender and sexuality were central themes of the revival of Victorian studies from the 1970s onwards. Drawing on the methodologies of feminism, a number of important historical studies traced the separation of public and private spheres in the nineteenth century and its profound effect on the construction of gender identities in the period (Davidoff and Hall 1987; Nead 1988). Women were defined as domestic beings, it was suggested, 'naturally' suited to duties in the home and with children; whilst men were associated with the public sphere, the world of business and politics. Within prevailing middle-class ideologies, the comfortable suburban home with dependent women was an index of material success and moral respectability.

For the industrial bourgeoisie home was emptied of its association with work and became defined instead around notions of recreation, leisure, privacy and shelter. The home was 'domesticated' as were the women who were located within this sphere. Masculinity and femininity were defined in relation to their different fields of activity – the public and the private – and gender identities, it was argued, became organized around the ideology of separate spheres. The city, on the other hand, was defined as a dangerous and threatening place in which a population of working-class and casual poor could easily turn into a riotous mob. If women were actors on the urban stage, then it was as working women and prostitutes. Respectable women were invisible in this history of Victorian gender and the city.

In the wake of this work, further research on the nature of the home and of the diverse spaces of the city called into question the usefulness of the public/private dichotomy as a way of understanding the uses and meanings of space in the Victorian period (Vickery 1993, 2009; Walker 2001; Nead 2001). In the context of this reconsideration and re-theorisation of Victorian space, the home was seen

to constitute a number of different kinds of spaces, intended for diverse purposes that could not be neatly fitted into the single category of the private. Urban space was also redefined in relation to interiors and exteriors that might be more or less public or discrete, open or closed, and that might be populated by different factions of respectable and non-respectable classes. Women were thus placed back onto the urban stage as visible, active participants in the street culture of the nineteenth century.

In her work on gender and the city, Elizabeth Wilson has argued that urban life offered many women new kinds of freedom and the possibility of independent existences. Wilson identifies the city as a place of adventure, pleasure, excitement and risk for women; a place of economic and erotic possibilities (Wilson 1991, 1992). In general terms, however, the liberating potential of the city, in Wilson's account, is available only to working-class women. Bourgeois women, she concedes, were excluded from the spectacular public spaces of the city and were restricted to an expanded domestic sphere that embraced parks, department stores and so on. Wilson's work is significant for having introduced the association of female urban experience and pleasure. Although there is a risk, this is an inevitable feature of the modern city; as Wilson puts it: 'It is a matter for emphasis whether one insists on the dangers or rather the opportunities for women in the cities' (Wilson 1992: 103).

The reconfiguration of gender and urban space in the 1990s was conducted alongside a critique of the *flâneur*, a mythic figure of urban history that had dominated twentieth-century histories of the nineteenth-century city. Described most memorably in the writing of Charles Baudelaire, the *flâneur* embodied the new values and qualities of Second Empire Paris and of urban modernity more generally (Baudelaire 1863). The *flâneur* was the paradigmatic male occupant of the city streets, 'at home' in public urban space, the omnipotent agent of the male gaze and with a unique comprehension of the contradictory nature of modern life. If there was a female counterpart to the male *flâneur*, it was the female prostitute; according to this reading of urban space women in the nineteenth century could never aspire to the urban literacy and mastery of men. In a timely corrective, Wilson describes the *flâneur* as a fictional embodiment of a crisis in masculinity, created by uncertainties regarding public masculinity in the changing social spaces of the city. Wilson argues: '[The *flâneur*] is a figure to be deconstructed, a shifting projection of angst rather than a solid embodiment of male bourgeois power . . . The *flâneur* represents masculinity as unstable, caught up in the violent dislocations that characterised urbanisation' (Wilson 1992: 109). To challenge the identity of the *flâneur* is to begin to dismantle one of the central orthodoxies of recent accounts of modernity. It reopens the question of who occupied the streets of the nineteenth-century city and of the experiences of that occupation. Until recently, however, urban experience has continued to be understood as predominantly *visual* and the pleasures of the city as mostly *ocular*. If the *flâneur* has been displaced as the key interpreter of the urban crowd, then the idea of the city as a place of visual experiences governed by the principles of visual exchange, by the display of goods and advertisements, and the fashioning of self and society continues to prevail.

The historian of photography, John Tagg, has written about the ways in which the shift to metropolitan industrialisation involved a transformation of social life,

including gender and sexual relations in the city. But for Tagg, these changes were performed through a predominantly visual register. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Tagg argues:

It is only through specific cultural representations that particular looks – here, the look of the *flâneur*, the look of the policeman, the look of the record photographer – comes to be conflated with the authority of the gaze. And it is only in the struggles to impose and institutionalize such cultural representations that these looks, and the practices, protocols and discourses in which they are inscribed, come to be legitimized as distinct and discrete regimes, and, simultaneously, assigned the status of ‘universal’ law: the universality of Art and pleasure, or evidence and truth.

(Tagg 1994: 99–100 n.17)

Whilst these institutionalised looks are, according to Tagg, always provisional and require frequent reinstatement, they are nevertheless part of a popular regime in the nineteenth century of sights and visibility. The visual aspects of the Victorian city have dominated recent cultural readings of urban social relations in the period, but this fixation on vision and images to the exclusion of other kinds of sensory exchanges must surely have produced a distorted account of how men and women in the nineteenth century performed and experienced urban space. The interpretation of this encounter by the press at the time as an ocular exchange conforms to recent accounts of the nineteenth-century city in terms of visual experiences governed by the principles of visual exchange; by the display of goods and advertisements, and the fashioning of self and society.

Our own experiences of the city and a re-examination of texts and images from the period should tell us that the visual is only one register through which the city in the nineteenth century was understood and experienced. In her study of women’s politics in nineteenth-century North America, Mary P. Ryan has documented women’s routes to public political life through voluntary associations, street protests and parades (Ryan 1990). Through their presence, Ryan argues, conservative male–female distinctions were severely tested in public space and could be corroded by the everyday practices of real men and women. Life on the streets of major industrial cities was volatile, diverse and untidy, and the potential for chance, random contact with strangers was a constant feature. With this formulation, perhaps, we are getting nearer to the world of ‘Paterfamilias’ and the subsequent competing and conflicting interpretations of his daughter’s experience. Ryan continues:

The big city of the industrial age was first and foremost a marketplace, circulating goods, services, and people in a dense physical environment cut through with narrow public arteries. Along the way to producing, buying and selling, strangers routinely crossed each other’s paths, often making brusque physical contact . . . Denied both personal knowledge of their fellow citizens and the refuge of precise social segregation, they were destined to ‘crowd and jostle each other’ every day on the public streets.

(Ryan 1990: 61)

Here we move from a model of social interaction based on display to one based on circulation and an account where the physicality of people renders them a type of good, rather than a kind of image. So how might we reinterpret the texts relating to ‘Paterfamilias’ in the light of this different model? To start with it would involve seeing the encounter as one that involved speech and physical harassment, rather than just looking. Whilst it is true that Paterfamilias’s account may have been inaccurate, the original letter to *The Times* reported that ‘a young fellow in the garb of a gentleman kept walking before and behind them alternately for some time, and at last [he] had the audacity to come alongside and make some observation’. For this to be reinterpreted as a ‘rape of the glance’ by the *Saturday Review* is to ignore the physicality, duration and spatiality of the encounter as first described and to turn the rich sensory history of the Victorian world into a purely visual one. How, then, can we restore touch and speech to a cultural history of Victorian gender and urban relations; what archives or sources are there and what might count as evidence for such a historical account?

On 26 July 1858, the police columns of *The Times* reported a case that had been held in the previous week at Rochdale petty sessions, against Mr John Bold (an unfortunate name under the circumstances!), a manufacturer from Halifax, charged with having ‘assaulted the widow of the late Mr Eastwood’, a solicitor from Todmorden, Yorkshire (*The Times* 26 July 1858: 7). The report described how Mrs Eastwood had left Liverpool with her daughter in a first-class railway carriage, shared with two other gentlemen and the defendant. It continued:

After the train had started [the] complainant felt her foot touched by that of the defendant. She deemed this an accident, and removed her foot out of the way, but it was soon after pressed again by that of the defendant, who then raised his foot towards her knee, whereupon Mrs Eastwood turned partly round on her seat, and so cramped herself that she was sadly inconvenienced, and at length solicited a gentleman to change places with her.

At the next station, Mrs Eastwood complained to the railway staff and the railway company, clearly concerned to protect the reputation of the railway as a safe form of travel for women, had provided the solicitor for Mrs Eastwood to bring the case to court. The defence explained that Mr Bold suffered from rheumatic gout and was merely trying to ease his discomfort when he made ‘accidental’ contact with Mrs Eastwood. The judge deemed Mr Bold guilty of the charge of assault and imposed a penalty of five shillings.

The details of this case offer an extremely literal instance of the circumstances of touch between two strangers, a man and woman of the middle classes, in the middle of the nineteenth century. The setting of the confined space of the railway carriage immediately demonstrates the inadequacy of the public and the private as spatial categories. It creates a vivid narrative of the man’s offence and the woman’s response; the initial contact, its aggravation and the woman’s uncomfortable attempts to get out of his way. Indeed, the police columns of the mid-Victorian newspapers are full of cases of inappropriate and, frequently, unlawful forms of contact. Indecent exposure was one of a number of breaches of urban order that had been brought together under the new Town Police Clauses Act of 1847, and

cases appeared in the courts with startling regularity. On some occasions indecent exposure was exacerbated by further offence, as in the case of a costermonger who was charged with ‘indecently exposing himself to the servant maids in Gordon-square and the neighbourhood, and with addressing filthy language to them’ (*The Times* 3 August 1858: 9).

In some cases the harassment culminated in serious violent assault. In one case heard at Bow Street criminal court a soldier in the Fusilier Guards was charged with assaulting a young woman as she was walking to her home in the centre of London. He accosted her and offered to carry her bag; she refused and walked on, but he followed and again spoke to her:

‘Haven’t you a sister with us?’ She did not know what he meant, but she replied ‘No’, and went on . . . he again overtook her and said ‘Shall I go home with you?’ She replied ‘Certainly not.’ ‘Then’ said the prisoner ‘will you give me a kiss?’ Witness replied ‘No and if you do not leave me I will call my brother.’ The prisoner then snatched up her reticule, and attempted to wrench it from her. She called ‘Police’ several times and the prisoner struck her a violent blow which stretched her almost senseless on the ground.

(*The Times* 24 September 1858: 9)

Again the details rendered through the report of the legal prosecution provide a particularly intense and vivid narrative of the encounter: the initial address; the further physical imposition and the spoken insinuation (he suggests that her sister may be a prostitute in a brothel); the explicit sexual harassment; and finally the attempted theft and violent assault.

Although these cases begin to create an image of Victorian urban society as a world of spoken and physical encounters, the danger of drawing on them too heavily is that they create an image of the Victorian female pedestrian as a victim, thus confirming the fears of conservative writers in the period who believed that women placed themselves at risk if they moved about the city unaccompanied. Women could also be imagined in this period as the agents of a predatory, aggressive touch, although this behaviour marked them out as at least ill-mannered and at most as sexually deviant. In Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s 1846 pen and ink drawing *The Ladies of Marlboro’ Street* (see [Figure 16.2](#)), two prostitutes accost a man in the street. As the woman further from the picture plane smiles out at the viewer, the second woman traps the man against a wall between her arms, bringing her face close to his. The physical pressure and contact between the two figures is the focus of the image; the transgressive action of the woman and the cowering pose of the man represent a reversal of the respectable manners being codified in the laws and courts of the period.

If the physical contact of the ladies of Marlborough Street was clearly unacceptable, there were many possibilities for acceptable forms of touch between men and women in the industrial cities of the nineteenth century. Indeed, opportunities for this kind of interaction were abundant. In a humorous article in the *Saturday Review* on ‘Umbrellas’ as a symbol of modern social life, the author suggests that sharing umbrellas provides opportunities for the development of friendships that would otherwise not occur.



Figure 16.2 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Ladies of Marlboro' Street*, executed c. 1846. Sepia ink on paper, 23 × 19 cm, private collection

It is very difficult to remain an absolute stranger to the man who has walked a few miles with one under the same umbrella; a confidential relation seems to spring up with singular rapidity under the kindly circle of its roof.

(*Saturday Review* 18 May 1872: 628)

Moreover, more amorous relationships have grown out of the circumstances of sharing an umbrella. The hesitation and awkwardness between two lovers vanishes at the first drop of rain:

Strephon opens his umbrella, and Belinda is soon hanging to his arm, and pressing closely to his side. It is easier to utter the 'three little words' when they can be whispered under an umbrella than when they have to be shouted across a gravel path.

(*Saturday Review* 18 May 1872: 628)

The article celebrates the tactile license and intimacy offered by the umbrella. The lovers press against each other and whisper in an entirely legitimate manner that

might, in other circumstances, have been seen as unacceptable. With these kinds of text it is possible to begin to imagine a history of gender in the Victorian period as a history that embraces touch and speech.

MODERN ETIQUETTE

In 1872 Augustus Mulready exhibited a small genre painting at the Royal Academy summer exhibition entitled *Our Good-Natured Cousin*, depicting three fashionably dressed figures (two women and a man) strolling in a London street. The poses, gestures and composition of this group make it an intriguing pictorial imagining of the debates concerning modern street etiquette in the period.

As discussed above, the Victorian city was a crowded, heterogeneous place where men and women could come into contact with each other in unprecedented and unplanned ways. One way to rein in the contingencies and volatility of modern urban life and to impose a kind of order or system on the unexpected was to codify public behaviour through street etiquette. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century hundreds of guides and handbooks to social etiquette were published, with special sections devoted to conduct in the streets and in other modern spaces (Curtin 1987). These texts evoke a world of polite, stylised public discourse. In a world of diversity and unpredictability, they provided unequivocal instructions for heterosexual propriety on the city streets. It was, perhaps, to the upwardly mobile middle classes that the books were addressed; as the preface of one publication observed, etiquette was particularly important in a mercantile country like England, where people are continually rising in the world: ‘Shopkeepers become merchants, and mechanics manufacturers’ (Day 1849: 13). The advice offered in the pages of the etiquette handbooks is necessarily unambiguous and conservative; it represents the attempt to codify respectable public manners at a moment when actual behaviour seemed to lack definition and was open to multiple interpretations.

The rule of thumb of street etiquette was that a lady had the privilege of first acknowledging the gentleman. No man should stop to speak to a lady, until she has recognised him with a bow; as one author put it: ‘The lady in short, has the right in all cases to be friendly or distant’ (Anon. 1859: 275, see also Anon. 1864a: 48 and Anon. 1866: 76). This rule also applied to other new public spaces such as the railway carriage: ‘In railway travelling you should not open a conversation with a lady unknown to you, until she makes some advance towards it’ (Anon. 1859: 288). It seems Mr Bold was breaching etiquette as well as breaking the law when he assaulted Mrs Eastwood in the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway carriage. Having given women the initiative in the public greeting, it was then open to her to either acknowledge the gentleman or to ‘cut’ him with a stiff bow and no smile, or by ignoring him altogether. All etiquette manuals contained sections on variations of the ‘cut’ that were effective but not vulgar.

Once the greeting had been dispatched, there were equally detailed guidelines about how men and women should walk together on the streets. Initially, a gentleman should not walk with a lady ‘unless invited verbally or tacitly’; once asked to accompany her, the man must then ‘offer her [his] arm’ (Anon. 1859: 288) and keep to the outside of the path, with the lady on his inside (F.W.R. and ‘Lord Charles X’ 1867: 39). The nuances of speech, gesture, pace and proximity



Figure 16.3 *Our Good-Natured Cousin*. From the Picture by A. E. Mulready, in the Royal Academy, *Graphic* 7 September 1872: 225.

were all covered in the etiquette handbooks. As far as women's behaviour was concerned, she should not be excessively animated or noisy, nor should she attract attention to herself:

Never look behind you in the street, nor about you so as to attract attention. Do not talk or laugh loud out of doors; indeed, no lady ought to laugh so as to be heard in the street; she must preserve there a quiet manner, and a smooth, graceful walk.

(Anon. 1866: 75, see also 77)

Women, generally, were advised to speak in low tones, with loud speaking regarded as a sign of bad breeding (Anon. 1864a: 22). The dividing line between acceptability and unacceptability was 'the point where duty ends and pleasure begins' (Mulock 1858: 32). These rules of good behaviour were specific to the social life of the city and many authors explicitly stated that they did not apply to manners in the country. In the city, strangers routinely came into contact, and in the dense physical environment of the urban marketplace gradations of familiarity mattered. Although a number of the etiquette guides were published in a miniature format, suggesting that they should be carried around with their owner for instant consultation, it is likely that many of the rules were internalised by men and women of the middle classes and that they were adapted for everyday use rather than obeyed to the letter. Rules of speech and touch allowed users to assert their identity by flouting or changing conventions, to demonstrate their modernity or their conservatism through their observance or neglect of canonical codes of behaviour. And above all, rules, like city streets, allow ambiguity and spontaneity, so country girls go for a walk in the West End of London and may or may not encourage the attention of a young male stranger; or a young man insults their respectability and exploits their naivety by flouting the rules of acquaintance.

Augustus Mulready was a genre painter, the grandson of the highly successful Royal Academician, William Mulready, and a member of the Cranbrook Colony who specialised in picturesque images of everyday rural life. Mulready, however, made his reputation with images of Victorian city life, depicting urchins and flower sellers in apparently easy, untroubling scenes of street life. In many ways Mulready's work is undistinguished and little has been written about him either during his lifetime or since the revival of Victorian modern life painting from the 1960s. Because of the number of paintings he produced on the subject of city life, however, the theme of gender relations is repeatedly addressed in his work, and the ambiguities of touch, look and speech are present in his paintings just as much as they are present in the texts of the period. In *A Polite Acquaintance*, dated 1875, a woman and child shelter from a rain shower in the doorway of a church. A gentleman bows to them, his hat in his hand, and appears to be offering to share his umbrella. But do they know him? There is a suggestion of hesitation or uncertainty in the face and posture of the young woman; could the offer of an umbrella be the alibi for the kind of romantic closeness imagined in the pages of the *Saturday Review*? If they step out of the shelter of the church with its ancient carved saints and angels, do they expose themselves to the brusque physical world of the city street?



Figure 16.4 Augustus E. Mulready, *A Polite Acquaintance*, 1875.
Oil on canvas, 66x39.5 cms. Private Collection.

Our Good-Natured Cousin also deals explicitly with contemporary urban gender relations and behaviour. Mulready evidently liked this subject, or had some success with it, because he painted at least two other versions of it and also included the group in the background of other pictures.³ There is something about the relaxed informality of this group that makes it unmistakably modern. The position of the two young women, chatting behind their companion's back, makes it clear that the group is strolling and that this pace is part of the pleasure of the thing. They are set in a London street on a sunny day with the long shadows from the buildings behind them and their own bodies adding to the languor of the scene. The shops in the background are those of an undertaker (advertising 'Coffins Made Upon the Shortest Notice' and 'Economy' funerals) and a pawnbroker, and yet any inclination to read this image as a moralising genre painting along the lines of the mortality of youth is resisted by the comfortable friendship of the group itself. The city is a place of commerce and the circulation of goods and people, but these figures appear to be participating in this world at their own pace and on their own terms. 'Two ladies may without any impropriety take each one arm of [*sic.*] single cavalier; but one lady cannot, with either grace or the sanction of custom, take the arms of two gentlemen at the same time' (Anon. 1864b: 38, see also Anon. 1866: 76–77). The captivating pose of the figures would appear to conform to etiquette codes; the behaviour of the stylish young man does not, however: 'A gentleman will not smoke when walking with ladies' (F. W. R. and 'Lord Charles X' 1867: 38). This scarcely seems a serious infringement and evidently did not appear so to audiences at the time of its first exhibition. In fact, critics were most impressed by the wit of the subject, which seemed to set it apart from other genre pictures at the Royal Academy exhibition. The *Saturday Review* commented: 'he seizes the point in a story, he achieves his narrative with wit and humour', adding: 'Wit seldom ventures to enter a place so grave and decorous as the Academy' (*Saturday Review* 8 June 1872: 730). The critic for the *Graphic* admired its unpretentiousness, pointing to the 'provincial smartness' of the young gentleman and the humour and vivacious treatment of the subject (*Graphic* 29 June 1872: 606). In fact, the *Graphic*, which was launched in December 1869 and marketed in terms of the quality and extent of its illustrations, liked Mulready's painting so much that it reproduced an engraving and commentary on it in September 1872.

Re-presented as a black-and-white engraving the figures stand out more distinctly from their background than in the painted version. The commentary takes the form of a gossip, rather breathless monologue by one of the female figures:

Annie *loquitur*: 'Yes, is not Adolphus a good-natured duck? You see, Florence is at school in Notting Hill, while I am at school in Brighton, and so we scarcely ever meet except in the holidays, and then we have ever so many things to talk about. We talk incessantly. We begin to talk the first thing when we wake in the morning, and we talk one another to sleep at night. In fact, the only time when we don't talk is in the evening, in the drawing-room, because Pa wants to go to sleep, though Ma says it's horribly bad for him. Well, Florry and I can't go out alone about the streets very nicely, because rude men stare so abominably, so we make signals to Cousin Adolphus (he lives at No. 54 round the corner, and he's studying for the Civil Service) to act as our escort.

Dolph is delighted to throw aside his books and come, and he's the most good-natured soul in the world. He lets us chatter away to our hearts' content behind his back, and he does not grumble a bit . . . We allow Dolph one privilege, a very mild cigarette.'

(*Graphic* 29 June 1872: 211)

It is hard to know where to pause the chatty narrative, as the speaker goes on to describe how one day an artist saw them walking and a few months later they appeared as an exhibit at the Royal Academy. The picture, she says, is the very image of Dolph but her companion is not as pretty as in real life. She regrets the background setting of 'two such horrid low shops' and suggests that the apartment store Marshall and Snelgrove would have been more appropriate.

The fictional figure's commentary locates her both in the street represented in the painting and at the Royal Academy exhibition where the picture is hung. Perhaps, then, the Academy is not the 'grave and decorous' place referred to in the *Saturday Review* but is another instance of the social-spatial world of the Victorian city that could both organise gender relations and enable their undoing. The opening of the annual summer exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts was part of the 'season' of social and cultural events for the middle and upper classes in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the weeks of its duration it attracted crowds of visitors who became as much part of its fascination as the paintings on display and were even the subject of Royal Academy paintings.⁴ In an article entitled 'Seeing the Academy', published in the *Saturday Review*, one author imagined a visit to the Academy as an excellent opportunity for flirtations. The crush enables a proximity that might not be possible in other locations and the subjects of the pictures may be used to create intimacies between visitors:

A pretty compliment to a face in the picture may be so managed as to cannon off to the face at one's elbow. A glance at the two rural lovers who are crossing the harvest-field may mean a good deal if the comment sinks into a confidential whisper. A certain tone will give interest even to the name of a picture or to the tags of verse which sprinkle the catalogue. It is difficult for the fiercest of dragons to guard her virgins against flirtations at the Academy. It is a place where it is easy to meet, and where one may meet again and again without the slightest intention of doing so. Lucky crowds and broad-backed gazers shield maidens from their chaperons. It is possible that charming little fingers may be squeezed in borrowing a catalogue, and that charming little messages may sometimes be found in the notes on its contents. After all, it is very difficult to sever between emotion and emotion, and the sense of beauty glides easily from the abstract to the concrete.

(*Saturday Review* 1 June 1872: 691)

With this fascinating extract it is possible to imagine an affective and dynamic experience of viewing pictures. Whispered innuendo and squeezed hands escape the codification of the etiquette manuals and are orchestrated by the images and titles of the paintings on display. It is a place somewhere midway between the oppressive world of the assaults recorded in the court reports and the impossibly

decorous world of the handbooks. It begins to suggest the opportunities for different kinds of social behaviour that the city made possible and that made women such as the journalist and writer on household management, Constance Peel, recall in her memoirs of London in the 1880s: 'Once we were allowed to go out alone ... We felt that anything might happen to us ... the excitement was delicious' (Peel 1933: 55). *Our Good-Natured Cousin* – as image, text and exhibit – serves as a case study for a history of gender and urban society in the Victorian period that moves beyond the visual to include tactility and speech, and which discovers the ways that men and women negotiated prevailing standards and formalities of gendered identities. Moving beyond a concept of the city as visual spectacle and of gender relations governed by the gaze, we can now work on how the city addressed all of the human senses and how men and women looked at, spoke to and touched each other in urban space.

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NOTES

- 1 Judith Walkowitz has discussed street harassment as a specifically late-Victorian discourse, created by a convergence of historical developments in the West End of London and changes in newspaper reporting. My contention is that concern regarding gender and urban behaviour developed earlier and was not confined to London. See Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London', *Representations* 62 (Spring 1998): 1–30.
- 2 *Punch* published a second cartoon making the same kind of joke on 8 February 1862, p. 58.
- 3 See *Our Good-Natured Cousin*, c. 1872 Christie's, London, 20 July 1975, no. 120; *A Sunny Day*, 1874 (in which the two female figures are posed in front of the young man); and *The Urchin Flower Vendor Standing at a Street Corner while Elegant Figures Promenade Beyond*, 1872, Bonham's, London, 5 April 1979, no. 91.
- 4 See for example, William Powell Frith, *A Private View of the Royal Academy in 1881*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1883 where it had to have a rail around it to protect it from the crowds.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DISEASE AND THE BODY

Pamela K. Gilbert

What connexion can there be between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world who from opposite sides of great gulfs have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!

Dickens, *Bleak House*

Dickens's great novel of 1852–53, *Bleak House*, provides an ambitious panorama of the world of Victorian London. In so doing, it stages the centrality of public health in the Victorian period, encouraging the reader to think about the interconnectedness of diverse elements within the social body – and even outside it, across the ‘great gulfs’ of empire. How does his boy character Jo, an orphan bereft even of a last name, who sweeps crossings by day to earn enough to doss down in Tom-All-Alone’s, a slum modeled on the infamous Rookery, connect to the myriad other characters, wealthy and middle class, titled or professional, who fill the novel’s pages and to the complex geography of London and its suburbs? How did the fate of such impoverished, illiterate and hungry Britons relate to that of prosperous mid-Victorian Britain as a whole? And how did his readers’ understandings of social relations within Britain relate to understandings of relations across emerging global communities of empire and trade?

Three related forces made this question urgent: economic development, epidemic disease, and political change at home and abroad. These forces led to a number of social and governmental changes, including the development of modern public medicine. Great improvements were made in sanitation, tracking public health statistics (births, mortality, illness), and in the emergence of the people’s health as a primary goal of good government.

Great changes are usually motivated by great challenges. To get to the point of making expensive, difficult, and politically unpopular ‘improvements’, great disturbances had first to be experienced. Urbanization, increased mobility of workers



Figure 17.1 *Tom-All-Along's*, illustration from *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens (1812–70) published 1853 (litho), Browne, Hablot Knight (Phiz) (1815–92). Private collection. Ken Welsh. The Bridgeman Art Library

under industrialization, and imperial development allowed Britons to experience, collectively if not always individually, a great increase in wealth and access to goods. These changes also proved fertile for the intensification of existing diseases, such as typhoid and tuberculosis, and the circulation of unfamiliar pathogens in new populations, such as the first known movement of cholera to every inhabited continent on the globe in the early part of the century. The movement of disease followed trade and colonization in both directions, bringing European diseases to the Pacific, just as earlier movements had decimated the populations of the Americas. Increased wealth brought increasing literacy and new ideas to the masses; revolutions abroad also sharpened the propertied classes' anxiety about the possibility of worker violence, and gave the increasingly wealthy middle classes confidence to demand incremental political change.

These economic developments, however, also meant the erosion of traditional modes of life and their economies, so that in the event that the new industries or new agricultural practices failed, mass immiseration could happen with surprising speed. Increasing wealth drew workers to factories making cotton fabric in the Northern cities; when North America, Egypt, and India began to compete in these areas with their slave or coolie labour, factories in Northern England slowed production and skilled English weavers had few other trades to fall back on. And when the potato blight struck Ireland, which had been encouraged in the eighteenth century to move from cultivating multiple agricultural products to the financially and calorically more rewarding monoculturation of the potato – a New World miracle vegetable – mass starvation and emigration was the immediate result. Overcrowding of impoverished and undernourished workers in cities lacking infrastructure for eliminating wastes provided an environment tailor-made for the propagation of infectious diseases like influenza, diseases related to the contamination of food and water like cholera and typhoid, and animal vectors such as rats and lice, which spread typhus. Periodic outbreaks of *ague* (intermittent fever caused by contaminated water), smallpox, and other diseases completed the assault on the health of urban residents.

SANITATION AND MODERN MEDICINE

In 1832, the chronic problem of epidemic disease that periodically decimated Britain and especially its major cities became dramatically acute – so dramatically that many writers of the period could find nothing more appropriate to compare it to than the black plague of 1665–66. In the throes of major political reform and amid fears of revolutionary violence, a new and therefore more frightening disease struck, mostly in the 'fever nests' of overcrowded slums that had been tormented by typhus and *ague* for years, but also in some more respectable areas. Although cholera did not kill as many in that epidemic as other diseases like typhus took and had taken annually for years, the novelty of this dramatic foreign disease made it terrifying. The timing of the epidemic led it to be discussed in tandem with voting reform that was the other major topic of conversation in 1832, the great Reform Bill. The two topics were extensively discussed in the light of emerging ideas of a unified social body of citizens or potential citizens committed to a common economic, moral, and political good. In that context, cholera quickly became a metaphor –

on all sides of the debate – for everything that was wrong with the current system: on one side, Reform advocates linked the deadliness of the epidemic and the government's apparent inability to stop it to its perceived disregard of the well-being of workers and the poor. On the other side, what was thought of as mass hysteria about cholera was a perfect example of the kind of irrationality of the group now claiming a role in governing the country.

Long after the passage of the Reform Bill, epidemic disease continued to operate as both a sign of and a metaphor for problems in the 'condition of England' – most notably, the failure of the community to manage its poor. In 1832, Edwin Chadwick was engaged in restructuring the old Poor Laws that granted food and relief to the impoverished, making it more difficult to qualify for such help, in part because the new mobility of workers meant that poor urban parishes were overrun with needy applicants. Watching the carnage of the cholera epidemic, Chadwick understood it in terms of the prevailing model of miasmatic influence. Germs had not yet been discovered, and for Chadwick, the cause of disease was clear. Miasma – bad smelling air – created sickness. Slums, where most of the sickness was to be found, tended to smell very bad indeed. Chadwick's next official task was to spearhead the sanitary campaign to clean up England's large towns, which was for most legislators obviously related to dealing with the unruly poor. But the undertaking was huge, requiring the cooperation of unwilling property owners, frightened sufferers who feared to be dragged away from their families and forcibly hospitalized, and the myriad minor officialdom who collectively managed, or failed to manage, cities still organized into countless tiny parishes that operated largely independently of each other. In 1842, he submitted his report to the government, and in 1848, with another major cholera epidemic marching through Europe, a General Board of Health was formed and serious change began. By 1858, local boards were given more authority, and measures for monitoring and improving sanitary conditions, though imperfect, were in place.

Chadwick established a rough institutional structure for gathering sanitary information and acting on it that provided a starting point for the ongoing activity of sanitary and medical reformers throughout the century, which would eventually encompass issues well beyond those of epidemic disease and would become one of the most important functions of government. Gradually, the sanitary movement changed from a general management project based on 'common sense' to one highly mediated by new forms of expertise. The emergence of statistics in the period as a significant source of knowledge for the government combined with the increasing professionalization of medicine to form a formidable body of specialized knowledge wielded in the service of national health. And, although the sanitary model of disease-as-dirt was to maintain strength for most of the mid century, medical knowledge was undergoing a modernization that eventually would impact the sanitary project. In the early part of the century, the study of 'morbid anatomy' was revolutionizing medicine. Young Britons went to Paris, the acknowledged leading site of innovation, which offered such lecturers as Xavier Bichat, whose *Anatomie Générale* was published in 1801. This new knowledge, based on dissection and new techniques of magnification, led to a model of medicine that was less focused on systemic balance and more on the localization of disease. Diseases were increasingly taxonomized over the course of the century, and

identified as having specific symptoms and etiologies, rather than simply being thought as diverse manifestations of essentially similar states of imbalance. By the 1890s, spurred in part by Robert Koch's work on anthrax, germ theory would take a dominant role and the shift to thinking of diseases as being specific problems caused by specific entities would be complete. Evolutionary theory and eugenics would also influence both medical and social scientists. Sanitarians' focus would change from improving drainage to improving people. In the *Bleak House* era, however, even the sanitary project of urban cleansing still had far to go, and as Dickens was to describe an evening in London in 1852: 'It is a close night, though the damp cold is searching too . . . a fine steaming night to turn the slaughter-houses, the unwholesome trades, the sewerage, bad water, and burial-grounds to account, and give the registrar of deaths some extra business' (Dickens 1905: 412).

DISEASE AND THE SOCIAL BODY

Through the voluminous dialogues of commentators and legislators, the medics and clergy, the statisticians and philosophers, the idea of a coherent social body including the whole population emerges as one connected by its vulnerability to diseases introduced through its least privileged and most problematic members. The social body was constituted in terms of elites' health and the poor's disease: modernity, civility, cleanliness, and health were counterpoised to developmental backwardness, oppressive social structures, filth, and fever. In *Bleak House*, Dickens's heroine Esther and her child maid, Charley, sicken after being exposed to Jo's fever. The disease Dickens had in mind was likely smallpox, which, even though vaccination had made inroads into its virulence by this point in history, still took over 6,000 Londoners' lives in the 1837–40 epidemic outbreak alone. Charley escapes nearly unscathed, but Esther's face is disfigured by the disease, which often left deep, pitted scars. Jo, however, like those other thousands, ends his short, difficult life in the grip of the 'speckled monster', under the compassionate but ultimately helpless gaze of Esther's suitor, the young surgeon Allan Woodcourt, symbol of hope in the future. And Esther and Allan end the novel having moved away from London, to doctor the poor in Yorkshire, where the odds against them seem less overwhelming.

Bleak House provides a convenient entry point into many of the themes that were central to the public health discussion. Dickens was an important voice in the discussion of sanitary issues, in which he took a passionate interest. He was particularly interested in the housing of the poor, especially 'slums', generally seen as flashpoints for epidemics. As Alan Mayne points out, 'slums' are mythic representations mobilized largely by and among middle and upper class commentators that homogenize the lived materiality of diverse areas inhabited mostly by the poor. Jack London, who decided to live in the East End in 1902, was struck by the fact that no 'West Ender' could tell him exactly where it was. Dickens, who walked the city comprehensively (perhaps compulsively) had a more exact sense of place. But his representation of those places contributes to and participates in the slum stereotype. Dickens has Jo lodge, when he can afford to, in a slum that is a 'fever nest':

Jo lives – that is to say, Jo has not yet died – in a ruinous place known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people . . . [.] Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch vermin parasites appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, . . . fetching and carrying fever.

(Dickens 1905: 204)

Dickens chooses Holborn for his slum, placing it in the location of the notorious St Giles Rookery – the most famous slum of the West End at that time. In his novel, Tom-All-Alone's is property tied up in a lawsuit, seized upon by unscrupulous entrepreneurs and let and sublet down to the level of nightly lodgings, in which people would pay for the privilege of sharing a room with several others for a single night. Even very dilapidated properties were in high demand in the major cities, generating high ground rents. As we see in this passage, although there is sympathy for the poor who huddled together in such lodgings, the poor are also viewed with some repugnance, even by Dickens: they are likened to 'maggots'; they 'swarm' like the 'vermin' who infest them – and like such maggots, they were thought to generate disease that moves beyond the boundaries of the ruins in which they 'decay'. Addressing the problems of the poor and of the slum is positioned as the same project.

And for the first wave of the sanitary movement, this belief dictated the approach: destroy the slums and the fever nests would be cleansed with them. The problem, of course, is that the people remained and often crowded into nearby areas that then became even more overcrowded than the original slum. When the Rookery was destroyed by the New Cut (now New Oxford Street) in the 1840s, an 'improvement' that opened the area to light and air deemed necessary for sanitary cleansing, as well as for the eradication of crime in its dark maze-like alleys, one medical man estimated the population increase in the nearby Church Lane slum at 67 per cent in one year (Guy 1851: 34). In one of the many commentaries on slums being published at the same time as Dickens' novel ran in serial form, Thomas Miller lamented:

True, the wedge has been driven into the rotten heart of the old Rookery of St. Giles's, and New Oxford-street has sprung up from the corruption; but what has become of the inhabitants who battered on the core of the decayed tree? Like a nest of ants, they are turned loose to overrun other neighbourhoods.

Like Dickens, Miller exemplifies the period's emphasis on the connection between, as well as the proximity of, rich and poor:

You may build yourself a fine house, my lady, and hem it round with a lofty wall; but you must, while in town, still breathe the poisonous air which they breathe. . . . the very atmosphere . . . of the sewer sewery – of the filth filthy –

poison ever propagating poison – gutters ever generating deadly gases, and creeping into the blood of the inhabitants.

(Miller 1852)

Fever nests were old, poorly drained, overcrowded buildings, thought not only to be a congenial environment for the propagation of fever, but to actually produce fever themselves. Medical man and fever expert Thomas Wrigley Grimshaw offers a description to colleagues in the *British Medical Journal*:

What are the characters of a ‘fever-nest’ ? The . . . whole upper part of the house is dilapidated; going downwards, we first come to . . . a place covered ankle deep with human filth, a privy and ash-pit totally unapproachable without passing through a sea of dirt, a water-tap running and washing such of the dirt as is within reach into a pipe-sewer which runs through the cellar of the house, and which has a hole in it, through which the sewage passes into the cellar, converting it into a cesspool. This cellar was immediately beneath two rooms inhabited by a family of fifteen, every one of whom had enteric fever.

(Grimshaw 1871: 607).

Other infrastructure problems involved the lack of an organized sewer system in the metropolis, and the consequent overstrain on the city’s myriad small cesspits and small streams that had functioned effectively as sewers when the population was smaller. In short, the process of building sewers, though perhaps unglamorous, is one of the great impressive urban achievements of the nineteenth century – but it was not without its own casualties. The immediate result of these efforts was the massive contamination of the Thames. Matter that would before have been contained in cesspits until partially broken down and then carted away for fertilizer by ‘night soil’ men now washed directly into the city’s drinking water. In what Michelle Allen has called ‘the most notorious pollution crisis of the nineteenth century’ (Allen 2008: 55), the Great Stink, legislators were driven out of the Houses of Parliament during the long hot summer of 1858 by the horrifying stench given off by the much-abused river. The cholera epidemic of 1857–58 was probably at least partially provoked and certainly aggravated by aggressive sanitary measures. Still, over the course of the century, the sewerage of the city did have a dramatic positive impact on the health of the metropolis.

The hordes of poor in the slums were associated also with moral evil and danger – crime, prostitution, and irreligion. Although we tend to think of these as ‘social’ rather than medical problems, that distinction was nonexistent for early Victorians, who saw immorality, crime, and disease on the same continuum of filth-generated problems. Further, the slums were, in an increasingly global economy generally, and especially in England’s many port cities, visibly sites of foreignness. The East End was home to waves of foreign immigration, from settled labour such as the Irish to Eastern European Jews, to more itinerant labour such as the many African Americans, ‘lascars’, and Chinese sailors whose movements depended on the shipping industry. As Mayne points out, foreign communities added to the unfamiliarity of smells and sights present in places of high population density, and in an era in



Figure 17.2 'The raw material as we find it'
© Barnardo Archive

which all smell created suspicion of disease, the response of bourgeois commentators was often a literally visceral rejection of even prosperous immigrant neighborhoods as slums (Mayne 1993: 176–77).

Moreover, the emergence of an evolutionary model as a dominant metaphor for understanding not only biological evolution, but moral and social change as well, also brought new ways of considering the question of the poor and their public health challenges. Degeneration was inherently a concept associated with flawed whiteness, but whiteness could be hurried in its downward development by association, or worse, intermarriage, with the 'less-civilized' races. By the mid century, these were not merely considered issues to be reactively addressed, but as problems to be proactively prevented through urban planning. And as crime was increasingly medicalized and understood as linked to moral and physical defects in the individual, those defects were understood as the outcome not only of environment

(such as slums), but as an evolutionary process in which immorality could be inherited by the children of slum dwellers.

EVOLUTION, RACE, AND EMPIRE

Doctors, lawmakers, and criminologists began to think of such supposedly inheritable tendencies as the outcome of two processes: degeneration, which was held to be the result of poor environment over generations of reproduction (it was a canard of the 1890s that after three generations in London, originally healthy families would show serious physical changes), and the impact of sanitary laws and social aid that ‘protected’ hereditary lines that would otherwise have succumbed to natural selection. As early as 1852, Dickens uses animal metaphors with the language of degeneration to warn of the dangers to society of neglecting the urban poor in *Bleak House*, comparing Jo to a stray dog: ‘Turn that dog’s descendants wild, like Jo, and in a very few years they will so degenerate that they will lose even their bark – but not their bite’ (Dickens 1905: 206). The fear of evolutionary degeneration runs throughout the European literature of the period – most obviously in such French authors as Zola, whose 20-novel chronicle traces the degeneration of the Rougon-Macquart family into prostitution and madness. British literature is also heavily inflected with these ideas. It is particularly obvious in late nineteenth-century horror novels such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or *Dracula*, wherein the villains are either characteristic of the barbarian inside the civilized man or represent the incursion of foreign barbarity onto English soil.

Evolutionary theory also fuelled the trend of biologizing ethnic or regional differences as ‘race’ in a hierarchical evolutionary model in which Western and Northern Europeans were superior to (or more evolved than) Southern and Eastern Europeans and people of non-European descent (see Lester, in this volume). New sciences such as anthropology were devoted to generating taxonomies of humans and societies according to a developmental model. Exponents such as Herbert Spencer and James Frazer traced the evolutionary ‘advancement’ of societies from simplicity to complexity, and homogeneity to heterogeneity, which was thought to parallel the evolution of life from single-celled organisms to complex mammals. The races, it was thought, developed similarly in successive orders of complexity, through natural selection. Some races ‘stalled’ on the way to these higher and more complex forms, often because their warm and fertile geographic location supposedly offered insufficient challenges to force further development. These views were hardly uncontested; many queried the logic of applying biological processes to social organizations and many also questioned the kinds of biological evidence that were marshalled to show that the darker races were inferior in the first place. Still, such views were influential enough to have had a significant impact, and periodically emerge in racist rhetoric today.

These schema were often applied not only to non Europeans but to differences within Europe as well. For example, in 1850, Scottish doctor Robert Knox published *The Races of Man*. In it, he claimed not only that blacks were inferior to whites, but also that there were inherent differences between Celt and Saxon: The Celt, for example, was characterized by ‘Furious fanaticism; a love of war and

disorder; a hatred for order and patient industry; no accumulative habits; restless, treacherous, uncertain: look at Ireland' (Knox 1850: 27). His arguments about the differences between the races are characteristic of the period, and have to do with some of the usual physical markers of difference: size, strength, brain size and nerve 'texture', the slope of the cranium, and the angle of the jaw and nose are all adduced as evidence of physical superiority or inferiority. He concludes, 'Look all over the globe, it is always the same; the dark races stand still, the fair progress' (ibid.: 211). Although views on race were diverse, the idea that racial difference was a credible way to understand historical and cultural complexities was widespread. In 1849, a young MP who would someday be prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, stated in Parliament that 'Race implies difference, difference implies superiority and superiority leads to predominance' (Disraeli 1881: 299).

In addition to biases about race and culture, there was a mix of fascination and distaste for the lands and peoples increasingly seen not simply as different, but as both inferior to Europe, and as an unpredictable encumbrance on the process of gathering wealth from Britain's colonies. Colonies with large indigenous populations, such as India, were associated not only with a more savage state of humanity, but with disease. Although some official attempts were made in British India to bring areas up to emerging sanitary standards at home, the task seemed both impossible and unremunerative. Though a Royal Sanitary Commission was formed in 1859 to look into sanitary conditions in India, their concern was with the army rather than the native population. The result was the segregation of white administrative and military residences from the local inhabitants, and thus every place with significant British residence also had its 'Black Town'. One travel writer for *Harper's Magazine* described Calcutta's native area:

Black Town as it is called – the native portion of the city – though anxiously thrust away from sight by the aristocratic and splendid metropolis, like a dirty garment under a gaudy silk robe, lies closely by this architectural display, and insists on asserting itself beneath the very shadow and in the august presence of English Calcutta. A mud hut, or clusters of native hovels, are plastered like wasps' nests against the sides of palaces, and there are back slums and perspectives of indescribable squalor and filth opening out from the principal avenues. This background of every thing that is repulsive and horrible is peculiar to India. It crops out every where, and seems to breathe in the very atmosphere. The earth reeks with pollution, and the heavens are offended by the smoke of abominable sacrifices. . . . in short, we have in this vast peninsula the most perfect instance on record of the complete inversion of all natural and moral laws.

(Stuart 1867: 301)

In this passage, we see a sexualization and dehumanization of the natives not unlike descriptions of London's poor; their homes are like 'dirty undergarments' and they are like nesting insects. Yet we also see how the description of slums – which would typically be accompanied by a recommendation for amelioration, were this a description of a slum in England or the United States – are attributed not to the effects of urban poverty or colonial development, but to something intrinsically

evil in the land itself and the people who populate it and pollute it with their 'abominable' practices.

As sanitary measures had some impact on many epidemic diseases in London, and as the British government began to see the colonies more as a challenge to techniques of governance than as a source of wealth, the focus on managing epidemics as well as managing the Other began to be understood more in terms of politics and culture rather than simply as an engineering or medical problem. By the latter half of the century, in both sites, government began to consider proactive methods of 'mobilizing consent' for change that required a sense of shared community. In India, as at home, sanitary reform was folded into a more diffuse programme of moral and cultural propaganda campaigns, educational strategies, and government-sponsored cultural bonding activities like competitive team sports (see Pernau in this volume). Management of the poor in Britain began to be figured as similar to the challenge of governing natives of colonial lands; both groups were described as ignorant, superstitious, uncivilized, childlike, potentially violent, and shy of kindly attempts to change their behaviour 'for their own good'. Both groups could be, basically, made more like the British middle classes. Still, though poor Britons could be educated into living up to their own heritage, Indians, it was thought, would never be able to do more than mimic Western culture.

Concerns about imperialism joined with racial 'science' to promote a belief that the white man's destiny was to rule the world, aiding (and controlling) the darker races who were as savages or children to the fully developed European. These beliefs crossed the political spectrum from the conservative to the far left. For example, late nineteenth-century feminists often were among the most vocal advocates of eugenics, which dovetailed with the purity movement's concerns about controlling male sexuality and also provided a central role for women in developing the imperial agenda. Literary scholar Angelique Richardson observes that eugenics was fundamental to many of the New Woman writers and to the feminists of the latter part of the century. She quotes the novelist Sarah Grand, who writes in an 1886 tract, 'The Present Moral Crisis':

England, and England alone, is the mighty mother of nations. Three great nations have already sprung from her loins; a fourth in Africa is already in process of consolidation. From the narrow confines of our sea-girt island our people pour out into all quarters of the globe; and if we suffer England to know corruption we send forth polluted waters into all lands.

(Richardson 2000: 236)

Grand, Richardson argues, made sexual and reproductive management not only a personal, but an imperial project, a responsibility of every woman. If 'degeneration was a masculine narrative . . . regeneration was feminine' in Grand's eugenic schema (ibid.: 240).

EVOLUTION AT HOME: SANITARY EUGENICS

When Dickens warned that Jo and his ilk, like dogs gone feral, might degenerate into savagery and 'bite', he was using this threat to argue for the provision of what

would later be called social services. It would not be long, however, before theorists such as Francis Galton would warn that the increase in such services (such as Poor Law relief and medical aid for the indigent and disabled) would result in the survival of those who were less ‘fit’ to do so, weakening the human stock of the nation. It was a short but significant step from understanding the ‘underclasses’ in terms of evolution to a proactive eugenics that emerged at the turn of the century. Charles Darwin drew heavily on his cousin Galton’s ideas in the 1871 *Descent of Man*, in which he muses:

With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated. . . . We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws . . . vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. . . . excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.

(Darwin 1871: 161–62)

Although Darwin wishes that the unfit would refrain voluntarily from reproduction, he philosophically concludes that ‘if we were intentionally to neglect the weak and helpless, it could only be for a contingent benefit, with an overwhelming present evil. We must therefore bear the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind’ (Darwin 1871: 162).

Despite Darwin’s calculation that the multiplication of the unfit was, on balance, a necessary and acceptable side effect of the positive evolution of the social emotions such as sympathy, and thus an unavoidable corollary of civilization, subsequent advocates of eugenics were less nuanced. In 1883, Galton coined the term eugenics, and argued that society should strive for the twin goals of checking the birth rate of the evolutionarily unfit human and increasing the multiplication of the fit. Soon, repeating the earlier sanitarians’ move from eliminating the cause of disease to proactively promoting health, many theorists began to wonder if it were not time to consider intervening therapeutically in the evolution of the population. By the early twentieth century, this intervention would assume ugly forms such as forced sterilization of the handicapped, poor, or racially ‘undesirable’ in several European countries, as well as the US and various South American nations. (By the 1940s, of course, it would become in Germany a proudly avowed, state-organized project of genocide.) Most mainstream nineteenth-century theorists still felt that eugenics should be voluntary (for example, one should choose to forego reproduction if there were hereditary madness in the family), and they eschewed the idea of force. Still, there is a certain wistfulness even to these early discussions of the ‘good old days’, when the undesirable died off early. The Hygiene section in the 1886 edition of the popular household item, the *Family Physician: A Manual of Domestic Medicine*, admonishes that

The theory of ‘natural selection’ . . . ought certainly to have a great influence upon the science of public health . . . the weak members of a family are sure to be worsted in the battle of life, and the strong will alone survive. . . . In this

way the gradual improvement of the race is insured by the eradication of the weeds and the giving of more room for the healthy plants to flourish in.

(Physicians and Surgeons of the Principal
London Hospitals 1886: 907)

Sadly, however, he notes that the very science that brings the author to this understanding increases the challenges to natural selection, as it necessarily and artificially intervenes in this process. In a later passage, the negative evaluation of the ‘weak’ is made more pointedly:

We cherish our weeds. The patient with mental disease is allowed to go abroad . . . prostitutes are still permitted except in a few favoured localities to ply their calling and disseminate disease without restraint; and it is hardly too much to say that the hangman’s office has become a sinecure.

(Physicians and Surgeons of the Principal
London Hospitals 1886: 909)

The metaphor of weeds is widely used in writings about eugenics and degeneration at the turn of the century and in the period before the world wars. Sarah Grand’s 1912 novel, *Adnam’s Orchard*, uses this trope throughout, rather heavy-handedly: ‘It is with men as it is with plants, isn’t it? Some men may be developed with cultivation into fine flowers; while some flowers, because they have been neglected in important particulars, rapidly degenerate into unlovely weeds’ (Grand 1912: 433). In all cases, however, the logic of the metaphor is similar: the health of the garden or society requires that the growth of weeds be frustrated, and perhaps that weeds be actively culled. An article entitled ‘Practical Eugenics’ in *The Pedagogical Seminary* by John Franklin Bobbitt, noted American educator (who helped develop the US school curriculum in the Philippines), repeats the formula practically word for word in 1909, arguing that scientific and economic advancement has resulted in protection of ‘weaklings, mental, physical, and moral, that in former ages never could have survived. This protection has brought weeding to an end. We even protect and cherish the weeds with greater solicitude than the fruitful plants’ (Bobbitt 1909: 390). He proposes ‘the segregation of the unfit; and the sterilization of criminals and defectives of every sort’ but laments that ‘in general, public opinion is far behind the needs of the situation, and requires much education’ (ibid.: 392–93).

CITIZENSHIP

Thus public health over the course of 80 years developed from initial concern about protecting people from epidemic disease to a nascent programme of improving not only the quality of individual lives but both the larger biological and social organism. The continuity of concern with the relation of the vulnerable yet dangerous individual at the margins of society to the security of the prosperous center indicates the significance of the relationship between sanitation and citizenship. The 1886 edition of *The Family Physician* (see reference above) observes:

Besides the prevention of disease, one of the great aims of the science of public health is . . . the improvement of the race. We have only to look at the children – pale, wretched, pinched, crooked-limbed, and fighting with disease – who swarm in the London streets . . . to be sure that the town-bred children of the poor . . . must be vastly inferior as citizens – physically as well as morally – to the children who enjoy . . . fresh air, free exercise, and healthy parentage.

(Physicians and Surgeons of the Principal
London Hospitals 1886: 907)

Although the focus of reformers shifts from engineering architecture to engineering heredity, from the provision of ‘fresh air’ to actively tinkering with ‘parentage’, the overall goal of public health, from early sanitary reform to the eugenic ideas of the latter part of the period, was intimately tied to the new vision of citizenship that also emerged during this time. As more people were able to engage in the political process and ideas about society became more democratic and inclusive, medicine evolved as a technology for creating good citizens. If one required a healthy, active, educated mind and good morality to engage in good citizenship, current understandings of the mind–body connection meant that good citizenship required a healthy body. Obviously, an unhealthy person was less able to be productive and self-supporting economically. But it was also believed that ill health – and especially the kind of ill health and crowding associated with slum living – created bad moral health and thus, bad citizens.

At the moment of Jo’s death, Dickens famously addresses the audience in the voice of a barrister presenting the body as evidence to his audience-jury in a solemn appeal for justice:

Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, right reverends and wrong reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day.

(Dickens 1905: 602)

The motif of the dying child that runs throughout Victorian literature is a typically sentimental theme that was also a sad reality of Victorian life: whether a victim of culpable neglect or chance, the child represented innocent victimhood. What is remarkable about the conversion of Jo into this figure is that he is an unlikely choice for it. He is not middle class, not a pretty girl like Nell of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and not young enough to be identified with the other fever-ridden dying tots of sentimental fame such as little Johnny in Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend*. Jo is old enough to be known to the police by the nickname, ‘The Tough Subject’ and by implication to be a target of some fear and disapproval – a delinquent youth, not a helpless infant. But Dickens chooses in 1852 to present Jo – someone who can be envisioned as a wild animal capable of ‘biting’ – in the place of iconic child-victim. And that is probably because Jo, a male youth, is developmentally on the verge of becoming a particular kind of adult: not only a tough subject, but a bad citizen.

If the Jos of nineteenth-century Britain were seen as unlikely to develop into good citizens, they were also, as minors, coming to be understood to be a unique

case. Incapable of simply being responsible for improving their own condition while eventually becoming liable as adults to the consequences of it, the children of the poor imposed a special moral obligation on society. This obligation was twofold: first, to protect them from circumstances that would corrupt their capacity for future citizenship such as disease, malnutrition and exposure to crime, and second, to provide such tools as would make them more able to exercise the freedom and civility required by the emerging model of citizenship once they were of an age to do so. Vaccination and other specifically medical measures were of course parts of this process, but education was also seen as a sanitary intervention, likely to militate against the degenerative physical condition increasingly associated with poverty in late nineteenth-century models of social evolution. Jo's illiteracy and ignorance of religion is a trap from which he cannot free himself, and indeed, makes him incapable even of conceiving a desire to free himself.

It must be a strange state to be like Jo! . . . To see people read . . . and not to have the least idea of all that language – to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! . . . Jo's ideas of a criminal trial, or a judge, or a bishop, or a government, or that inestimable jewel to him (if he only knew it) the Constitution, should be strange! His whole material and immaterial life is wonderfully strange; his death, the strangest thing of all.

(Dickens 1905: 205)

Jo is incapable not only of understanding what increased wealth would have to offer him – the world of commodities and respectable human relations that are organized through written language – but of the basic values and institutions of society, in which he is therefore incapable of participating. Jo is trapped – he is not made capable of becoming a good citizen, but if he were to live, he could hardly help but become a bad one.

Citizenship, as many Victorians understood it, was a concept rooted in Greek conceptions of the polis as identical with the military force of the state. The citizen merited his (and he was always male) status because he possessed certain wealth and thus a stake in protecting the state. But he was also able to meet the demand to protect the state's security with his own able body. In 1903, a furor erupted over the supposed unfitness of men recruited for military service, as the Boer War sparked an extensive public discussion about national decline. John Frederick Maurice, in prominent articles in 1902 and 1903, stated that three of every five men who wished to enlist washed out of the service within two years as a result of physical unfitness. He attributed their poor condition to poor sanitary conditions and nutrition in early life. A. Watt Smyth, in *Physical Deterioration: Its Causes and the Cure* remarks that the early sanitary movement, resulting in declining death rates, 'had lulled us into a false sense of security and superiority. We forgot that the causes which had produced the conditions of early Victorian days were still at work' such as urbanization:

So self-satisfied were we, that nothing short of a great national peril could have saved us . . . The facts which came to light during the South African War revealed to us our true position, and the public which had rejoiced vicariously

in the triumphs of the heroes of the football field and the cycle track, were dismayed to learn that of those who wished to serve their country in her day of trial a startling number were found physically unfit to carry a rifle.

(Smyth 1904: 3)

Smyth observed that since 1845 the standard of minimum height for recruits had dropped six inches to only five feet, and more than half of prospective recruits still could not pass the requirement (ibid.: 21). By contrast, 'the average German recruit is taller and heavier than the average British recruit, and . . . after he has entered the Army he is healthier, spends less time in hospital, and has a lower death-rate' (ibid.: 22). As always in these discussions, interventions are aimed at the child; the adult is considered already unsalvageable. Smyth's solution, comically but not coincidentally, is a lengthy dissertation recommending the application of the educational policies of the ancient Greeks, including chorus dancing. 'A perfection which was attained hundreds of years before Christ', he concludes, 'should not be unattainable by a nation such as ours'. Educators must achieve their aims by encouraging physical exercise, and by giving poor children 'some ideal to live up to; and by making them feel that the nation is one great living body of whom they are a part' (ibid.: 150). Jo must not only be made basically literate and protected from disease, but civic-minded and athletic.

The sanitary and eugenics movements were thus spurred on by nationalistic and racist concerns about comparative deterioration sometimes described melodramatically as 'race suicide' (see Rentoul 1906, for example). One response to this crisis was Robert Baden Powell's founding of the Boy Scouts (and later, Girl Guides) to provide a strong foundation of national strength. Ironically, many of the activities and the imagery used by Baden Powell were taken from Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, stories of a lost native boy growing up feral among wolves in India. Little urban English children were exhorted to grow from 'cubs' to wolves and other adult animals they had never seen. Anxiety about degeneration both promoted fear of the Other and fascination with the Other's perceived closeness to nature and 'primitive strength'. Just as sanitary improvements were suspected of short-circuiting natural selection, the primitive was both a threat to and an important resource for promoting the health of the civilized. The reciprocal threat to the 'primitive', however, was generally seen as being of less concern. Many commentators blame the decimation of the Maori population on Europeans' introduction of sexually transmitted and other infectious diseases like smallpox, but a typical response was Isaac Featherstone's in 1856: 'The Maoris are dying out, and nothing can save them. Our plain duty as good compassionate colonists is to smooth down their dying pillow' (quoted in Dow 1999: 48). Some lamented the passing of what they described as simpler, nobler racial types, but the elegiac tone was often predicated on the necessity of those types' extinction.

The shift from amelioration and prevention of illness to proactively fostering health is part of a pattern in the period that moves from thinking of government as largely a matter of organizing defence, international trade, and protecting property at home thinking of government as having broad responsibilities (and to some extent powers) to foster the well-being of its people and to optimize the country's social development. This continuation of Enlightenment ideals of

perfectibility (or at least improbability) of society, the value and dignity of the individual, and, rather more controversially, the possibility and desirability of social equality, is complicated by the ideals' dependence on a concept of universality that was inevitably elitist, and based on a racist and sexist model of the human rooted in the cultures and values of Western Europe. In this view, the social engineering that it spawned, including the public health and sanitary movements, was at best patronizing and obtuse; at worst, genocidal. Recent scholarly work on the social body has thus largely followed a Foucauldian paradigm, and has focused on the coercion at the heart of liberal governmentalities and the racism and exclusion of such models of citizenship. But it is important as well to acknowledge the achievements of these efforts: the eradication of typhus and smallpox in Britain was, finally, a good thing, as was the extension of public education and, later, health care. The best of human efforts will always have complex motivations and effects and unintended – or intended, but in hindsight awful – consequences. In a moment in which neoliberalism seems poised to undo the gains begun under a Victorian model of governmentality, it is important not only to critique the problems of this vision, but to acknowledge its achievements.

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PART III
POLITICS
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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE VICTORIAN STATE IN ITS IMPERIAL CONTEXT



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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores an amorphous, slippery subject: the ‘Victorian state’. Some historians have written about how the state developed; others about how it functioned; and others still about perceptions of its proper role. Here, we consider the limits and responsibilities of state action as they were practically understood by Victorian politicians, colonial officials, clergy, voters and workers. In what arenas did the state become involved; and under what obligations and limitations did it operate?

Throughout, an imperial perspective is deployed, meaning that the discussion is neither limited to the ‘British state’, nor bound to a metropolitan view of Britain’s disparate empire. Instead the state is considered in a series of different but connected societies across the British Empire. The chapter addresses both how Britain’s imperial status affected the metropolitan state, and also how the state operated in different locations around the empire – Britain and Ireland, the settler colonies, India and the dependent empire. This imperial perspective emphasises the constant interchange of ideas, practices and people between metropolitan and colonial states. As John Darwin has argued: ‘only the parochialism of most British historians has veiled the pervasive effects of Britain’s external connections on its institutions and outlook’ (Darwin 2009: 7). The impetus to construct a national story in former colonies has similarly obscured the effects of empire on their own development. Here, it is argued that the British Empire, in all its diversity, also provides historians with an exceptionally useful, but under-utilised, comparative framework. While historians have often compared the metropolitan British state with its European counterparts, comparisons of the British state with colonial variants are less common. Apparent dissonances between what was considered the normal scope of state activity in, on the one hand, nineteenth-century Britain, and, on the other, those settler societies that derived their constitutions from Britain are particularly intriguing. The constitutional similarities, overlap of personnel and circulation of ideas within the empire allow the comparison of a series of closely related Victorian states, and the exploration of their development in an apparently liberal guise.

After considering how interpretations of the Victorian state have developed, the chapter addresses three divergent aspects of the state in the Victorian period: the relationship between the state and religion; state intervention in industrial affairs; and attempts to regulate prostitution. Allowing the examination and comparison of a number of states within the British Empire, these case studies enable us to explore how the role of the state retracted in some areas while expanding in others, and how, even in polities that shared common origins and deployed similar languages of progress and liberalism, understandings of the state diverged. Together they both demonstrate how enriching an imperial framework can be, and encapsulate what we might describe as the Victorian state's political, economic and Foucauldian aspects.

PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

Mitchell Dean defines the state as 'a sovereign body that claims a monopoly of independent territorial power and means of violence, that inheres in but lies behind the apparatuses or institutions of organized and formal political authority and ... is separate from the rulers and the ruled' (Dean 2004: 9). This usefully distinguishes between state, subjects and government. However, Dean's definition implies both that sovereignty was a stable concept and that only a single state could exert authority over a defined territory. In fact, in the early nineteenth century, the nature and legitimacy of 'the state' were under intense scrutiny in many different parts of the world, including across the British Empire (Bayly 2004: 100–06). Lisa Ford argues that the courts in Anglophone settler societies, attempting to obliterate indigenous customary law, were central to this process. Only in the 1820s and 1830s were sovereignty, territory and jurisdiction successfully conflated (Ford 2010: 2). In practice, too, the British 'imperial' state co-existed with a variety of colonial states and sub-colonial polities with overlapping or competing jurisdictions. This looseness in definitions, alongside the particular scrutiny of the state engendered by colonialism, make it useful to examine the state in a broad imperial and colonial context.

BRITAIN'S VICTORIAN STATE

The British state and the development of its functions and legitimacy in the Victorian era have a rich literature. Historians of Britain largely concur that successful attempts were made during the nineteenth century to establish the state's probity, through an emphasis on retrenchment and neutrality. Ostensibly, the Victorian state was minimalist, promoting *laissez-faire* and free trade, but, in practice, it treated distinct groups of citizens differently. For example, the working class were protected from the ravages of a totally *laissez-faire* state, for fear that such exposure would destroy their productive potential. Similarly, the nineteenth-century state justified adopting an interventionist approach to dealing with paupers, the insane and the criminal (Harling 2001; Harling 2004; Harling 2006). Nor should the state's apparent smallness be equated with a lack of power. The British state was able to assess and collect taxation more efficiently than France; and was likewise capable of intervening in the lives of its subjects in the name of public

health more effectively than absolutist Prussia (Baldwin 2006). This discrepancy between size and power is indicative of the lumpiness of the British state. It warns that a fixation on the state's central functions might distract us from an appreciation of the significant growth of local government during the nineteenth century (Mandler 2006: 2–3). Historians also agree that by the end of the Victorian period, the British state had become more interventionist, while Britons had become more comfortable with the idea of an interventionist state. In the 1830s, although the state's right to protect or improve particular, quite narrowly defined, groups was typically accepted, more general interventions were viewed with suspicion. Voluntarism or self-help were preferred ahead of state welfare across the political spectrum (Biagini 2006: 109). During the Victorian period, however, liberals stopped seeing the state primarily as a threat, which had to be constrained and guarded against, and accepted its greater intervention in subjects' lives. This transition can be linked to the expansion of the municipal electorate and, through the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts, the national franchise. The sense that the state did represent the people was reinforced; consequently, state interventions that affected the general population in health, education and welfare became less problematic, a legitimate means of helping the populace reach its full potential (Parry 2006a: 31–32, 43; Parry 2006b). The story of the British state, then, is bound up with liberalism's emergence as the defining political ideology of the Victorian era.

VICTORIAN IMPERIAL STATES

The coherence of this interpretation of the Victorian state rests at least partially on its focus on Britain. Viewed in their imperial or colonial manifestations both the idea and the nature of the state look different. This is hardly surprising: Britain's colonial states, including those with substantial white settler populations, proved themselves far readier to use or to threaten force against their inhabitants, than to feel obliged to negotiate with them. It was not uncommon for British liberals and radicals who denounced state intervention or violence domestically, to accept or even embrace it in the empire (Thompson 2007). This undermined one of the central assumptions of the modern liberal state: that is, that whilst the state reserves the use of violence to itself, its effectiveness rests on a negotiated and largely peaceful contract with its subjects. Similarly, the Victorian state appears less *laissez-faire* in economic terms once the unequal fiscal relationship between metropole and colonies is examined (Daunton 2008: 128–46).

Several scholars have considered these contradictions through the lens of liberalism. Both Stuart Macintyre and Uday Singh Mehta have argued that rather than being universal, nineteenth-century liberalism was contingent on race, gender, power and, crucially, location. Mehta demonstrates that liberalism's paradoxes are revealed in English liberals' thinking and writing about India (Mehta 1999). Macintyre, by contrast, shows that liberals in the Australian colony of Victoria deployed the language of liberalism to recommend and implement a type of society quite different from that which English liberals used the same language to create in the United Kingdom. Such potential ambiguities, according to Macintyre, did not just reflect the colony's different circumstances, but were inherent in liberalism itself. The 'liberal tradition', he argues, which Victoria's statesmen 'embodied was

more a code of conduct than a precise political programme'. Thus it provided both flexibility and a kind of intellectual or moral authority to those who defined themselves as 'liberal' (Macintyre 1991: 5; Wilson 2008: 8).

The nature of the Victorian state is illuminated in discussions of 'liberty' and 'liberalism' that took place in the nineteenth century. This chapter, when considering issues such as the role of the state in industrial disputes, its duty to cultivate religion and morality, or to protect its inhabitants from sexually transmitted diseases, explores the balance of causes that led not only to divergent policies in different locations, but to the acceptance that these policies were a natural outcome of liberalism. In other words, it asks how much of the divergence was due to the particular circumstances of Britain and its colonies; and how much to flexibility in the meaning and deployment of 'liberalism'?

Looking beyond the imperial British state to the different types of state found in Britain's Empire raises more questions. These states' relative autonomy changed during the Victorian period, but each, ultimately, was overseen by the imperial government, as Kennedy outlines in this volume. As such, none possessed the degree of sovereignty that defines a state, yet all acted, in practice, as if they were states. Peter Burroughs has argued that the American Revolution first posed this conundrum: 'how could colonial self-government be successfully reconciled with Imperial unity?' (Burroughs 1999: 187).

For the future 'Dominions' – Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand – the answer was 'responsible government' as Finn discusses elsewhere in this volume. Most settler colonies gained significant self-government in the 1850s; in the Cape Colony, Western Australia and Natal, only residual metropolitan concerns about settlers' treatment of indigenous peoples delayed it until the 1870s and 1880s. A broader franchise than in Britain was a feature of these societies, at least for white men, while in 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to enfranchise women.

Elsewhere in the empire, the trajectory looked quite different. Representation for more than a tiny minority of Indians did not occur until the twentieth century. In Britain's West Indian colonies, white electors voluntarily relinquished representative local legislatures after the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion, preferring disenfranchisement to sharing power with those who were black or mixed race. Responsible legislatures were not reintroduced until the 1880s. British rulers deemed imperial subjects in tropical Africa and across Britain's Pacific possessions unready for any substantive role in their own government during the nineteenth-century. Finally, closest to home, the British Parliament denied Home Rule to the Irish in 1886.

Some historians of the state and politics in Victorian Britain, including Miles Taylor (2000), Martin Daunt (2008) and Jonathan Parry (2006a), pay close attention to imperial events and concerns. Catherine Hall (2000) is one who has suggested more empire-conscious ways of situating ostensibly British debates about citizenship and representation. The historian of India, Jon Wilson, has gone further, arguing that 'Britain's first modern state' actually 'emerged in Bengal' in the early nineteenth century (Wilson 2008: ix). Generally, however, the nineteenth-century British state has been strangely absent from accounts of imperial history, even though the empire shaped the British state in terms of professionalisation; the

impact of high naval expenditure on the metropolitan tax base; the flow of ideas about the state back to Britain from the colonies; and the development of Britons' self-perception that they possessed an 'oceanic and imperial destiny' (Thompson 2007: 39–40).

These Victorian states were products of the interaction between various imperial sites at different times, co-, or multi-, constituted by networks that allowed the ebb and flow of ideas, practices and people, and contributed to ever-shifting power relations both between various local regimes and between domestic and non-domestic realms (Howell 2009: 19–23). Whilst alert in daily practice to particular colonial circumstances, metropolitan administrators and politicians tried also to keep the wider imperial picture in view. Notably, senior British politicians – including Lord Stanley, William Gladstone and Lord John Russell – occupied the Colonial Office during one or another of the key nineteenth-century debates on colonial statehood. These politicians consciously connected the problems and manifestations of the state in its colonial and metropolitan guises, and brought their experience and knowledge of the empire to bear on questions with metropolitan ramifications.

Settlers took a similarly connected and sometimes expansive view. Even the earliest expected that concessions made to one colony, or set of colonies, would be offered to others. Colonial debates about the relationship of the state to its subjects routinely drew upon notions of 'Britishness' and British 'rights', and the arguments, pressure and action of colonists (and those they colonised) did influence the imperial government. For example, Cochrane's colony-focused analysis of Australian democracy shows that analogies, arguments and comparisons with the United States, Canada, the Cape Colony and France, as well as Britain, were used in Australian debates about the shape of their polity. Not infrequently, colonists found the British state and political system wanting. One Australian Justice of the Peace agreed that Britain's constitution was 'a good one', in comparison to 'continental despotisms', before continuing: 'But as a scheme of government not for a barbarous but for an intelligent people, it is one of those political institutions that will not bear examination. It is a system in which the public liberties have been trampled on for ages' (Cochrane 2006: 388).

Readings like Cochrane's, which accord settlers significant agency, complicate and challenge explanations of settler self-government that emphasise British motivations. Parry, by contrast, stresses the 1840s' frustrations of Britain's Colonial Reformers and the subsequent influence of libertarian language in making self-government 'less controversial' for metropolitan politicians, but this imperial awareness is not a concession of colonial agency (Parry 2006a: 17, 56–57, 84–90). Our understanding of the Victorian state in general will be more nuanced if we also consider the impetus coming from the colonies, and the connections between colonial and metropolitan debates.

CHURCH AND STATE: QUESTIONING ESTABLISHMENT

In 1836, Lord John Russell, then Home Secretary, argued that a state's duty was to 'inculcate religion and morality among the great body of the people' (*Hansard*

1 June 1836, 33:1277). A determined Erastian, Russell supported the establishment of the Church and was convinced of its theological basis. Whilst many agreed, the hegemonic status of Britain's established churches was under attack at the start of Victoria's reign. Together, the 1828 repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the 1832 Reform Act removed the need for conformity 'as a requirement for full political participation in the State' (Brown 2001: 168). Over the next 20 years, Whig and Tory governments alike retreated from the principle that the establishment should be commensurate with the population, first in Ireland and then across Great Britain. Debates about the relationship between religion and the state raged within the established churches and with other denominations, played out not only in calls for disestablishment or church extension *per se*, but also in controversies over church rates and tithes, repeal of the Union, state-funded education and papal aggression.

These arguments resonated beyond the question of the secular or religious nature of the state. Britain's established churches maintained an institutional presence 'rivalled only by that of the secular organs of state', with the parish forming the basic unit of not only ecclesiastical, but also civil, government (Burns 1999: 1). Thus, the story of the establishment of the church sheds light on political, social and economic, as well as religious, aspects of British life.

The church-state relationship in Ireland was central to these debates. From the 1820s until the Church of Ireland's 1871 disestablishment, measures to make the Irish establishment less intolerable to Catholics – particularly by reducing the scope and demands of the established church – modified (and were seen to undermine) the very idea of an establishment. Even after disestablishment, religion in Ireland and its implications for the Church of England continued to hound the Liberal Party, contributing to their 1874 electoral loss, and Gladstone's failed attempt to repeal the Union in 1886 (Parry 2006a: 132–37, 260–65; Brown 2001).

Beyond Great Britain the Church of England's status was privileged but unclear. Although Anglican clergy travelled abroad with British troops and settlers, 'little attention' was paid to the church as an imperial institution until the late eighteenth century (Border 1962: 1–2). The American and French wars provoked measures to strengthen the church: these included opening up India to missionaries and a small Anglican establishment; creating colonial bishoprics; and setting aside colonial land for clergy reserves (Strong 2007: 117–19). Supervision of the church in the colonies was initially shared between colonial councils, the imperial parliament and the bishop of London. In 1787, Nova Scotia became the first diocese in a British colony; by 1837, eight colonial bishoprics had been created.

The problem of boosting the Anglican Church in the empire was shaped distinctively by the particular circumstances of each colony. In some, like Upper and Lower Canada, and New South Wales, land had been set aside for the endowment of clergy and schools. By the 1830s, the Corporations established to oversee these endowments were mired in local political controversies: Governor Bourke abandoned New South Wales' Corporation in 1833 after less than ten years in operation. An Anglo-Irish liberal, who saw education as 'the business of the state', Bourke hoped to avoid sectarian conflict in Australia by implementing a version of the Irish National Schools system (Laidlaw 2006: 138–43). In Canada, the Anglican endowment had effectively disappeared by 1850 (Carrington 1963: 93).

At the Cape Colony, each Anglican ‘Ordinance Church’ was in separate communion with England, leading to weaker contributions to society (Hinchliff 1963: 23–24). George Selwyn, New Zealand’s first bishop, conceived of himself as a ‘missionary bishop’ with responsibilities extending beyond the colony’s borders (Porter 2004: 160–61). Despite these divergences, Anglican clergy were set above those from other denominations. Although the colonial parish was never as important in government as its British counterpart, Anglican clergy exercised special responsibilities on behalf of the state. So, for example, the New South Wales’ archdeacon became a member of both the Executive and Legislative Councils. Similarly, Anglican clergy were responsible for registering Australian births, deaths and marriages.

IMPERIAL ESTABLISHMENT

Historians of the Anglican Church in England have seldom considered the imperial context for debates over the church’s government and relationship with the state (Burns 1999: 3). Even works focusing on empire have devoted more attention to missionary activity than to the colonial churches (Brown 2001: x; Porter 2004; Brown 2008; Carey 2008). Only recently have those writing the history of church–state relations in the colonies connected debates about church governance and legitimacy to claims for secular self-government and the expansion of the franchise (Hardwick 2008: 13; Kaye 2003: 195). Such an approach, however, illuminates both the complexities of the Victorian state and important connections between the domestic and colonial churches.

Anglicans’ anxiety about state control over church affairs arose wherever and whenever Dissenters and Catholics gained political rights. Debates about government control over endowments and power over the clergy, about the provision of education, and about the status of the established church where its communicants were in a minority, were repeated across the empire. Diminishing parliamentary support for the colonial establishments from 1832 mirrored cuts in state contributions to church endowment in Great Britain (Porter 2004: 158), sharpening already heated debates.

Following the charge from the bishop of London that the imperial state was neglecting its duty as a Christian government ‘to attend to the spiritual needs of its colonies’, the church gained the authority to create colonial dioceses in 1841. Funded by private donations and Anglican funds, there was a four-fold increase in colonial bishops by the end of the 1850s (Strong 2007: 196–219; Blomfield 1840; Porter 2004: 159). These new colonial dioceses drew attention to the church’s legal status in the empire. Some were convinced that establishment had never been legal in the colonies, but most agreed that, in practice, establishment had been assumed, for example, in the provision of education and involvement in government (Daw 1977a: 66). Prominent metropolitan figures involved in colonial affairs – William Gladstone, Herman Merivale and George Cornewall Lewis – warned against colonial establishment. Unless Anglicans were in a large majority, establishment would only harm the church, unite non-Anglicans against the mother country and prove incompatible with colonial self-government (Merivale 1841: 258–67; Gladstone 1839; Lewis 1841). In 1844, in a call echoed in the Cape Colony, the bishop of New Zealand asserted the church’s need to be independent of the state.

Correspondingly, an ‘informal synod’ of New Zealand’s clergy was convened, although the canon law it drew up was deemed invalid (Daw 1977b: 253; Hinchliff 1963: 49–52).

For the colonies, as for Ireland, Gladstone advocated greater self-government in both political and religious affairs, arguing for ‘voluntary compacts’, between the church and colonial states (Daw 1977b: 254). Gladstone’s attempts to legislate to this effect, during the metropolitan debates on responsible government for settler colonies, failed to win Commons’ support (Border 1962: 189–98; Daw 1977b: 257–58). Meanwhile, colonial bishops, frustrated both by colonial states’ refusal to support the Anglican Church financially and by efforts to make welfare and education non-sectarian, organised regional and metropolitan synods and convocations in Cape Town, Sydney and Quebec. In 1853, bishops from New South Wales, Quebec, Newfoundland, Antigua, Cape Town and Nova Scotia met in London (Hinchliff 1963: 40–41; Carrington 1963: 113–15; Daw 1977b). At these gatherings, British, American and colonial evidence was used to debate how autonomy might be achieved and Anglican influence in society increased (Border 1962: 201–09).

The question of a bishop’s power over his clergy reverberated in both Britain and the colonies. In 1851, the bishop of Exeter disputed the privy council’s right to prevent him from disciplining a heretical clergyman, and convened an unauthorised synod in Exeter, just as colonial bishops were advocating self-governance through convocations (Burns 1999: 216–18). The Anglican *Guardian* linked these metropolitan and colonial movements, arguing that the Russell government treated ‘the Church as a mere state machine’ (quoted in Daw 1977a: 25). The *Guardian* urged colonial disestablishment: it was ‘absurd’ for the church to bear the ‘anomalies which attach to a State Church’ without reaping the proper benefits (quoted in Daw 1977b: 264). The Long and Colenso cases, which tested the limits of episcopal authority, reached the privy council in the 1850s from the Cape Colony and Natal respectively. Each had genuinely empire-wide implications (Hinchliff 1963).

Some English Anglicans hoped the colonies would provide a testing ground for the English church. The bishop of Norwich, who favoured disestablishment, wrote that an experiment in the colonies could be ‘safely made . . . expecting that, if the measure was found to work well there, it would lead to similar improvements at home’ (quoted in Daw 1977a: 16). Gladstone similarly hoped that a strong Australian endorsement of the incorporation of the laity into church governance would allow similar reforms in England (Daw 1977b: 258–62). From the mid 1850s, regular meetings of the Convocations of first Canterbury and then York were restored (Brown 2008: 178–80).

The Anglican Church operated in diverse colonial contexts, but connections between those concerned with church–state relationships criss-crossed the globe. Statesmen and politicians, like William Gladstone and Robert Peel, crucial in limiting the power and support the church derived from the state, were also closely involved with Britain’s colonial and Irish affairs. In the empire, colonial bishops formed a cohort of strong-minded senior clerics who, by the 1860s, had entirely dissolved the church–state relationship. That this occurred relatively smoothly reflects the ambiguous nature of colonial ‘establishment’, and the church’s weakness

at the parish level in the colonies. Clearly, debates about both the proper role of the state in religious affairs *and* the church in affairs of the state were conducted across an imperial space.

SURVEILLANCE, COERCION AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

While connections between the state and religious affairs diminished during the nineteenth century, state intervention rose in other arenas. This section addresses increases in the collection and utilisation of information by Victorian states, particularly considering attempts to regulate subjects' sexuality. Historians diverge on the reasons for the state's intensifying focus on the collection and control of information: were centralised repositories of information necessarily meant to protect the rights of individuals, or curtail their agency? An imperial perspective reveals that national, imperial and colonial concerns intersected and informed one another.

From 1819, the Colonial Office demanded the prompt return, on standardised forms, of ever expanding categories of statistical information from each colonial territory (Laidlaw 2005: 170–75). In India, Ireland, Britain and the colonies, trigonometrical surveys were undertaken at great expense. In Britain, decennial censuses were held from 1801, while the Registration Act of 1836 legislated for the registration of English births, deaths and marriages, utilising the local bureaucracy established by the New Poor Law of 1834. Although apparently in keeping with the Foucauldian expansion of tentacles of state power, Edward Higgs argues that the creation of centralised repositories of information – such as the General Registry Office and the Public Record Office – were intended to protect the private property rights of the growing middle classes, via 'the accurate recording of lines of descent' and entitlement, rather than enable surveillance (Higgs 2004: 73–81). Even England's Victorian policing, Higgs contends, depended very little on information gathering: information collected by the state was used not for repression, but rather 'to underpin civil, political and social rights' (Higgs 2004: 97–98).

An imperial framework undermines this explanation. Both the imperial state and its colonial counterparts struggled in the early Victorian period to utilise the information they gathered effectively, but its collection and significance undeniably stemmed from the need to control colonial populations and spaces (Laidlaw 2005). The regulation of prostitution is one area in which both comparative and integrated imperial approaches to state power reveal the importance of information and, specifically, 'the state's need to assert and maintain control over sexuality in order to assure its role' (Levine 2003: 37). Where imperial or military strength was challenged, imperial and colonial authorities were 'willing to suspend the panopoly of liberal rights' that grew up in the Victorian era (Howell 2009: 16).

Prostitution interested the state not primarily because of questions of morality or exploitation, but due to its assumed role in sexually transmitted infections (euphemistically called 'contagious diseases'). Britain's armed forces, replete with promiscuous soldiers and sailors, were seriously weakened by venereal disease. The metropolitan and colonial states, reluctant to antagonise fighting men and accepting gendered double standards, sought to reduce sexually transmitted infections by

controlling female prostitutes (Baldwin 1999: 374). In the quarter century after 1864, Contagious Diseases Acts were introduced in Britain and many colonial settings, compelling the registration, compulsory medical examination and detention of female prostitutes. Even so, in 1886, at the system's height, only about half of Britain's colonies had formal regulation, which generally applied to 'very restricted' areas within any colonial territory (Philips 2006: 112).

Contagious Diseases Acts depended on local circumstances and racialised assumptions about gender and morality. Richard Philips argues that, in fact, when it came to control over colonial sexuality, the British made a virtue of necessity and 'actively fostered a kind of heterogeneity, founded on robust flexibility' via the devolution of power from the imperial state to colonial legislatures and governors (Philips 2006: 220). In Britain, for example, acts introduced in 1864 were limited to naval bases and army garrisons; prostitutes were not required to register; and emphasis was placed on reforming incarcerated women. By contrast, in India, an 1868 act extended the scope of earlier legislation from military zones to cities. Indian prostitutes with European customers had to register with the authorities and submit to scheduled examinations. In Hong Kong, legislation introduced in 1857 placed responsibility on brothel keepers, rather than prostitutes (Levine 2003: 15, 40). Even in the settler colonies, where cohorts of white, as well as colonised, prostitutes rendered legislators more sensitive than in the dependent empire, Contagious Diseases Acts (where adopted) diverged widely from one another and from Britain. Nor did regulation always, or even usually, take the form of a Contagious Diseases Act. India and other colonies deployed alternative forms of legislation dating back to the early nineteenth century, while Philip Howell's studies of Gibraltar, Liverpool and Cambridge demonstrate how, respectively, acts to control civilian aliens, local by-laws and university regulations were used to regulate prostitution (Howell 2009).

Comparative studies of regulation in almost every kind of British colonial and metropolitan space show that while ideas about prostitution did sometimes disseminate outwards from Britain to the colonies, the empire also worked as a connected, networked space (Howell 2009: 19–23). For example, approaches adopted in the Mediterranean garrisons influenced British policy; while medical, military and official personnel drew on their experiences in successive colonial postings (Howell 2009: 154–86). Contagious Diseases Bills debated in South Australia in 1869 and 1875 drew on the English acts. Opponents of these bills, however, not only claimed that colonists were morally superior to their British counterparts, but used 'the agency of responsible government' to circumvent repressive legislation (Philips 2006: 96–99). British and colonial campaigners for the repeal of Contagious Diseases Acts made repeated claims for the empire as a connected moral space, although usually without following through the implications of such claims on imperialism's legitimacy. The repeal of domestic and Indian Contagious Diseases Acts was used, for example, to argue against the introduction of similar legislation to Natal in 1890 (Philips 2006: 136). Regulation's opponents conceived of the British nation 'as both part of and separate from its empire, and invoking a national imperial mission compatible with humanitarian and liberal sentiments' (Howell 2009: 26).

In contrast to their metropolitan counterparts, colonial governors in the dependent colonies and India had greater power to experiment with new forms of

government. ‘Unfettered by the moral dilemmas and accountability that restricted domestic legislation’, regulation in the colonies could be correspondingly harsher and more extensive (Philips 2006: 153–56). In some respects, this supports the long-standing argument that colonies were laboratories for experiments in statecraft, and, indeed, were recognised as such. As early as 1812, Robert Peel compared Trinidad with ‘a subject in an anatomy school or rather a poor patient in a country hospital and on whom all sorts of surgical experiments are tried, to be given up if they fail, and to be practised on others if they succeed’ (Murray 1965: 82).

STATE EXPERIMENTS IN INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

Finally, we turn to state involvement in industrial relations and welfare in late nineteenth-century Australasia. Compulsory state-led arbitration became widespread in the six Australian colonies and New Zealand by the end of the Victorian era. Other state interventions in industrial relations and welfare included the introduction of age pensions; restrictive liquor laws; making land cheaply available for development; and excluding aliens and undesirables from the labour market and, indeed, from the colonies (Mein-Smith 2005: 96). Self-consciously, these interventions drew on a notion of the state as representative of, and constituted by, its inhabitants. William Pember Reeves, the liberal architect of New Zealand’s Arbitration Act, and a keen observer of Australian politics, told New Zealand’s parliament in 1892: ‘I believe in the State because the State is now the people, and the people the State, and because the people are orderly and well educated’ (Sinclair 1965: 157–58).

Arbitration acts were based on ‘the principle that the state had a right and a duty to intervene in labour disputes’ and to ‘impose a settlement on the parties when they were unable to resolve their differences by peaceful negotiations’. Advocates of compulsory arbitration emphasised the destructive influence of strikes and lockouts on third parties, while opponents regarded state intervention in the relationship between employers and employees as an intolerable interference in private affairs and the advent of state wage fixing (Holt 1986: 15–16).

Compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes began in New Zealand in 1894 and was simultaneously debated in the Australian colonies, before being introduced there in the early twentieth century. Such state involvement in industrial affairs represented ‘a major departure’ from Europe and North America, and was almost entirely at odds with Britain, where state intervention was minimised in favour of voluntary conciliation (Macintyre and Mitchell 1989: 7–8). Nevertheless, these Australasian legislative experiments in industrial affairs were subjected to significant international scrutiny from Britain, the United States and France. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Ben Tillett, Charles Trevelyan, Henry Dumarest Lloyd and Albert Métin, visited and wrote extensively about Australia and New Zealand (Reeves 1902: vi–viii). This divergence reveals both the interaction between contingent local and international circumstances and late Victorian understandings of the modern state.

State interventionism in social and economic affairs, outstripping that of contemporary Britain, certainly characterised the Australian colonies and New

Zealand (Daunton 2007: 532–33). Partly, this stemmed from New South Wales' origins as a penal settlement, in which the state exercised authoritarian control over convicts and free settlers: former convict colonies had a tradition of strong and coercive intervention in labour relations. South Australia and New Zealand, however, had free origins in systematic colonisation, which stressed the creation of institutional frameworks able to 'reconcile liberty and material progress' (Macintyre and Mitchell 1989: 9). Geographically isolated – even from each other – and low in population, all Australasia's colonies also depended on the state development of infrastructure using capital raised on the British markets.

During the late nineteenth-century depression, settlers became more convinced that the state should secure investment for development, provide employment opportunities and cheap land, and ensure the economic and demographic growth and integrity of the colony. John Ballance, New Zealand's Liberal premier, considered the state 'not properly constituted if industrious people are out of work' (Martin 1996: 18). Increasingly, the government's role as mediator between settler economies and global pressures intensified to the point where what could be described as 'entrepreneurial states' emerged (Mein-Smith 2005: 94–95).

Given the broad franchise, and the early emergence of Australasian workers' parties, we should also consider the importance of organised labour in promoting compulsory arbitration. Industrial relations legislation did force the recognition of unions and state arbitration 'shaped and constituted the organized working class as well as the employers' (Macintyre 1989: 198; Holt 1986: 44). Subverting expectations, however, neither capital nor labour entirely enjoyed the upper hand in debating compulsory arbitration. Instead, the colonies' liberal politicians and theorists, and their view of both the state and of the damaging effects of industrial conflict, were crucial (Macintyre and Mitchell 1989: 111–13). Liberals' growing confidence that state intervention to secure conditions for individual and economic growth was justified gave the state greater responsibility for minimising disharmony. Justice Higgins, later associated with the articulation of a 'living wage', argued in 1897 that the state could not 'afford to stand idle and allow these disputes to be carried out to their bitter consummation' (quoted in Macintyre 1989: 186).

Legislation, personnel and ideas circulated between the Australasian colonies. South Australia saw the first bill for compulsory state-led arbitration introduced in 1890. New Zealand's 1894 act closely resembled this unsuccessful bill in form, and also drew on an 1892 New South Wales act (Mitchell 1989: 87–88, 94–95; Holt 1986: 26). Other Australian ventures in workers' welfare, like the expression of a 'living wage', would influence later New Zealand legislation (Mein-Smith 2005: 106). Although the colonies diverged in policies and emphasis, notions of the functions and responsibilities of the state circulated between them and drew on a distinctive notion of enfranchised, autonomous citizens.

AUSTRALASIAN SOCIAL LABORATORIES

Politicians and pundits in Australia and New Zealand enjoyed a self-congratulatory perception of their societies as 'progressive, trail-blazing' social laboratories (Atkinson 2003: 84; Thomson 1998: 159). William Pember Reeves called his analysis of the reforms *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, and spent

his later life promoting their emulation in Britain. Such self-perceptions were reinforcing: those advocating further state extension into the welfare arena invoked the colonies' record of progressive intervention and deliberate divergence from the Old World (Belich 2001: 78; Thomson 1998: 5–6).

These interventionist norms sit oddly with settlers' equally strident projections of themselves as independent pioneers. In effect, by boosting white immigration, opening up land for settlement, and investing in public works, colonial states created conditions that allowed prosperous settlers to emphasise their self-reliance, both through heavily gendered discourses of self-help and family responsibility, and via comparisons with Britain (Mein-Smith 2005: 88–90; Thomson 1998: 18). Real differences between Britain and the Australasian colonies did exist, but colonial liberals exaggerated how innovative and far-reaching their reforms were. Thus, although New Zealand was the first state in the world to introduce an age pension in 1898, it was neither generous nor widely available in comparison to other early adopters (Thomson 1998: 163). Other advances in education and employers' liability occurred in Britain before being implemented in Australia and New Zealand (Castles 1985: 16). In urban sanitation and public health, the colonies lagged well behind Victorian Britain (Tennant 1989: 164).

Equally, however progressive, colonial legislation that expanded the franchise, or increased levels of state intervention in social and economic affairs, was introduced more with patriarchal or conservative intent than with radical. Women's enfranchisement, in the Australasian colonies as in the American West, was justified on the grounds that it would provide a bulwark against male dissipation and the threat of non-white voters (Grimshaw 2000). Similarly, state-run wage boards, whilst protecting women and children from exploitation, also reduced the threat cheap labour posed to adult male workers. The much-lauded 'living wage' was to allow a male breadwinner to support his wife and three children. The stiff opposition received by the 1901 New Zealand Factories Bill, which proposed limiting the hours of all workers, not just women and juveniles, demonstrates how this gendered notion of a self-reliant worker was incorporated and defended (Nolan 1996: 60–61).

Alongside the historical and geographical conditions that contributed to Australia and New Zealand's distinctive approach to the state's role, specific political, economic and industrial circumstances also played their part. The 1890 Australasian Maritime Strike decisively changed the colonies' approach to industrial relations. Before the strike, Australasian legislation had been modelled closely on Britain's, and particularly on the 1867 Councils of Conciliation Act (Mitchell 1989: 78–84). Similarly, although the British and New South Wales governments both responded to disruptive strikes in 1890 by commissioning inquiries into how to handle industrial disputes, they reached divergent conclusions. Australian politicians concluded that compulsory state-led arbitration was essential, and their British counterparts the opposite (Bray and Rimmer 1989).

Australasia's experiments in industrial relations did, ultimately, lead to state wage fixing. By 1901, the effective remit of New Zealand's Arbitration Court had expanded to include 'fixing minimum wages, maximum hours, and conditions of employment in ever-growing areas of the private sector' (Holt 1986: 53); this enduring divergence from Britain was replicated across the Australian colonies

(Macintyre and Mitchell 1989: 14). Close cultural, political and economic links between Britain and the settler colonies could not completely determine the responsibilities the state would accrue, or its subjects' expectations of it.

CONCLUSIONS

What, then, does a consideration of the Victorian state in the imperial round tell us? At one level, it reveals the obvious: there was no such thing as 'the Victorian state', but rather a series of very different polities across the empire. The settler colonies and Ireland, particularly, offer productive if neglected opportunities for comparative studies, both between different colonial states and with Britain. When they travelled to the empire, British officials and settlers took with them assumptions about the state, its legal and moral bases, and legitimate capacity. But, in an era when self-governance was very much at the forefront of settlers' minds – both in terms of colonial autonomy, and in terms of the liberal individual's governance over the self – some of these assumptions received greater scrutiny beyond Britain. The empire of settlement, therefore, has much to offer broader imperial considerations of the state, sovereignty and liberalism. This chapter has also pointed to the possibilities of a connected imperial approach for national and imperial historiographies of the state. Changes in the nineteenth-century British state redefined the nature of the relationship between the state and its subjects, affecting both how subjects influenced the state, and how and when the state intervened in their lives. These changes are thrown into relief by a wider imperial – or indeed, global – perspective. Ideas and laws were translated and reinterpreted in an imperial space in which the metropolitan–colonial divide was just one of a series of cleavages. Examining institutions, forms and practices across this capacious imperial space is a way of bringing local, colonial and regional into discussion with one another.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

VOLUNTARISM AND SELF-HELP

—♦—
Alex Tyrrell

God speed the cause, the righteous cause,
Of Liberty and Peace,
And bless the land with equal laws,
And bid injustice cease.

Richard Robert Madden,
The Voluntary Principle (1841)

Nineteenth-century voluntarists were renowned for their fervour; addressing a Birmingham town meeting in 1859 Joseph Allday remembered the time when his fellow citizens had signed voluntarist declarations in blood (*Birmingham Journal*, 15 January 1859). He was referring to the bitter struggles against church rates that were compulsorily raised for the upkeep of the Church of England, but voluntarism could appear in a more benign form. Its tenets provided progressive theories of the state, society, economy and international relations; they offered pathways to physical well-being, true religion and moral elevation; and they went into the making of the ideal-typical Victorian, the man who practised self-help. They were even described as stepping stones that would lead to a blissful millennium for the whole of humankind. A modern sociologist's definition of voluntarism as 'organised activity within society that involves "self-governing associations of people who have joined together to take action for public benefit"' would have seemed insipid to the voluntarists of Victorian Britain (Edwards and Woods 2006: 56).

Writing in 1848 John Stuart Mill succinctly endorsed the theory that lay at the basis of much nineteenth-century voluntarism (Bullock and Shock 1966: 64). It envisaged

restricting to the narrowest compass the intervention of a public authority in the business of the community: . . . the burthen of making out a strong case [should fall], not on those who resist, but on those who recommend government interference. *Laissez-faire*, in short, should be the general practice: every departure from it, unless required by some great good, is a certain evil.

As Mill's words indicate, this did not amount to the total exclusion of government intervention or the advocacy of a devil-take-the-hindmost vision of society. Nearly everyone saw 'some great good' that constituted an exception to *laissez-faire*. David Roberts has even referred to 'paternal government' as a phrase that 'enjoyed considerable popularity in the Parliaments and the press of the 1840s'. The outcome, he adds, was so 'confusing', that it was possible for paternalism 'at certain times and in certain places to incorporate into itself both *laissez-faire* attitudes and self-help ideals' (Roberts 1979: 187–88). As a Conservative who successfully pressed for state regulation of female and child labour in factories and mines, Lord Shaftesbury opposed the radical free market ideology of Richard Cobden and the Manchester School, but he had more in common with them than appeared at first sight. In Geoffrey Finlayson's words, Shaftesbury believed that 'legislation and paternalistic and philanthropic effort were . . . to bring the individual to the point where he could harness his own resources of character. If they went beyond that, they would destroy the individual's initiative and responsibility' (Finlayson 1981: 602). As a consequence, although voluntarism came more easily to liberals and radicals as a philosophy of government, its institutions and many of its basic ideas were not their exclusive preserves. There was widespread agreement on the need for a wide-ranging area of collective endeavour situated between the state and the family, a 'civil society' where individuals could pool their efforts for the common good.

T. K. Hoppen's image of 'a flag emblazoned "*laissez-faire*"' flying over 'the mid-Victorian battlements' is a vivid reminder of the struggles that voluntarists had to wage against powerful forces that dominated the commanding heights of Britain's polity, economy and society (Hoppen 1998: 95). At the beginning of the nineteenth century a regime of privilege controlled many spheres of national life including parliament, the public service, local government and the professions. Foreign commerce was regulated by tariffs, and slavery was a significant part of the British imperial system, protected by the powerful West India interest in parliament. In their different ways the Established Churches of England, Scotland and Ireland exhibited the features of a confessional state. Not surprisingly, 'monopoly' was a term that loomed large in the demonology of many voluntarists.

Voluntary associations antedate the Victorian era; in the British case they have been traced to the late seventeenth century when associations of subscribers were formed to promote the religious, social and political aims of their members (Roberts 1998: 67). Those that were formed during a renewed burst of activity during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drew on several sources of inspiration. Frequently they were identified with 'the March of Mind', a term expressing the conviction that mankind in general and Britons in particular were brushing aside the forces of backwardness and entering a progressive era. This belief drew on the inspiration of Enlightenment thinkers who had cultivated rational inquiry to the point where it undermined the authority of time-hallowed ideas, customs and institutions, including those that were upheld by the force of law: 'Thinking for yourself' is the apposite title of a chapter in a recent book on the Enlightenment (Broadie 2001: 14). Checked by the conservative counterattack that followed the French Revolution, these dissolvent modes of thought welled up again after the Napoleonic Wars and reached a wider audience across the social spectrum. Many voluntarist activities were driven forward by beliefs of this sort, giving rise to the

proliferating educational experiments, mass publishing projects, public meetings and lectures that were characteristic of this era. Henry (later Lord) Brougham, who was associated with many of these ventures, thought that ‘the people must be the source and the instruments of their own improvement’, but he wished to see them ‘aided in their efforts to instruct themselves’ (Brougham 2009: 1). He was speaking in support of the Mechanics Institutes that were founded in the 1820s to offer what was called ‘useful knowledge’ to artisans. So widespread were voluntary societies of this sort by the end of the century that a speaker at a meeting in Ilkley could exult in the cultural revolution that had swept over the town in his lifetime: ‘We have our School of Art, our Scientific Club, our Literary Society, and Mutual Improvement Society, etc., but music takes the lead’ (*Ilkley Gazette* n.d.).

Among the Enlightenment writings that exerted a powerful influence on voluntarists, Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* stood preeminent, passing through so many editions that an editor described it in 1837 as an ‘immortal work’ that had received ‘the testimony of Europe, and, indeed, of the civilized world’. Smith anticipated Mill’s caveat that there would be occasions when ‘some great good’ would require public intervention – the provision of ‘a little school’ in every parish was an example – but the thrust of his argument was unmistakable; readers were introduced to a harmonious providential system that had little place for government interference. As the title of his book made clear, Smith was primarily concerned with economic matters. Touncing the case for mercantilism, the name given to the system of tariffs, bounties and regulations by which states aspired to create a favourable balance of trade at each other’s expense, he insisted that ‘it always is . . . the interest of the great body of the people to buy whatever they want of those who sell it cheapest’. Smith’s outlook went beyond mere tariff reform to embrace a new world order. He foresaw a time when ‘commerce’ would become ‘among nations as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship’ (Smith 1837: xv, xxix, 328, 201, 184).

Here was a programme of reform that reinforced many of the best-known voluntarist crusades of the nineteenth century. Its influence could be seen in the anti-slavery movement where abolitionists strengthened their humanitarian pleas by citing the section in *The Wealth of Nations* that condemned slavery as an egregious violation of the free market: less efficient and more costly than free labour, it punished the slaveholder and the British consumer as well as the slave (Smith 1837: 34). The Anti-Corn Law League, another of the great voluntarist campaigns, likewise argued for the good moral consequences of the free market by echoing Smith’s hypothesis that free trade was the gateway to global harmony. Following their triumph in hastening the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, Richard Cobden and many of the Leaguers moved on to participate in the Peace Congress movement as a corollary enterprise. Overstepping national frontiers they attempted to create an international public opinion that would dispel the rivalries of governments and the militarism of aristocratic elites that had vested interests in war and conquest. Arguably the most ambitious expression of mid-nineteenth century voluntarism, this experiment in ‘People-Diplomacy’ was remarkably fertile in its proposals (*Herald of Peace* 1853), some of which resonate into our own globalising era. At their international congresses in Brussels, Paris, Frankfurt and London (1848–51) peace activists advocated international arbitration agreements, universal

disarmament, protection of ‘aboriginal and weaker tribes’, a world court and system of justice, a scheme of international weights and measures, a worldwide postal arrangement, fraternal exchanges between twin cities and possibly even a world assembly (*Reports of the peace congresses* 1861).

Ideas derived from the Enlightenment jostled for public attention with others that drew their strength from a more ancient source, a belief in the transforming power of the cross (Thompson 1965: 350). The evangelical revival that was sweeping across the country at the turn of the century promoted a vision of the ‘born-again Christian’ who, dissatisfied with formal religion, embarked on a life of self-improvement by means of ‘vital Christianity’, biblical fundamentalism, personal puritanism and high moral pursuits. Enthusiasm in the dual sense of passionate zeal and a belief in direct divine inspiration was a characteristic feature of this mentality, spilling over into the voluntary societies for which evangelicals were renowned to such an extent that a historian has called these societies ‘the main organizational engine of the Protestant movement’ during the nineteenth century (Walls 2002: 180).

The aims of the voluntarists knew no bounds. William Wilberforce, the archetypal evangelical voluntarist, described his life’s mission as ‘the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners’ (Howse 1953: 119). He denounced slavery not only because of its inhumanity but also because it hindered the worldwide labours of Christian missionaries and cast the shame of sin on the British people. Evangelicals sought to redeem the nation through Sunday and ragged schools, city missions, tract and bible societies, anti-vice campaigns, temperance societies, projects for preventing cruelty to children and animals, agencies for relieving poverty, and countless other crusades against ignorance, immorality and suffering. Indicative of the eschatological sense of urgency that inspired many of their projects, one of Shaftesbury’s favourite societies, the Jews Society, worked for the return of ‘God’s ancient people’ to the Holy Land as a preliminary to the Second Coming.

Evangelical voluntarism had its powerhouse. Situated in the heart of London, Exeter Hall was opened in 1831 to provide a gathering ground for the great campaigns that evangelicals waged for the conversion and civilisation of Britain and the world. Here were to be found the mass meetings and headquarters, of some of the great voluntary societies. The highlight of the year was the May meetings when the evangelical societies brought their sympathisers together in a series of assemblies that were widely reported. For Sir James Stephen, a member of a famous evangelical family, this was ‘the age of societies’. There seemed to be no limit to their number; the Rev William Tuckniss estimated that there were approximately 530 charitable societies in London alone (Tuckniss 1968: xvii). Some of the best-known philanthropists of the day patronised scores of them. At the funeral of Samuel Morley there were representatives of 97 societies with which he had been associated, their names revealing the range and characteristics of the voluntarist empire – names such as the Baptist Total Abstiners Association, the Colonial Missionary Society, the Early Closing Association, the Lambeth Baths Committee of Working Men and the Young Women’s Christian Association (Hodder 1887: 328, 493).

From Exeter Hall and other venues the voluntary societies, many of which appended the words ‘British and Foreign’ to their names, spread their influence across Britain and the world. Thomas Carlyle saw their activities as an indication of the extent to which the Industrial Revolution was influencing human behaviour: they operated like ‘machines’ (Carlyle 1971: 65). Many societies had their own periodical press; activists were known to have scattered religious tracts from the windows of railway trains; door-to-door visits took place across entire cities; abolitionists organised boycotts of West Indian sugar and other slave-produced commodities; and some of the societies engaged salaried agents to conduct meetings and petitioning campaigns throughout the country. Cabinet ministers learned to dread intimidating visits from deputations of lobbyists on the eve of parliamentary debates. In 1858 Lord Stanley, the colonial secretary, noted warily that those who conducted British policy towards Africa could not ignore the sort of pressure that ‘English public opinion’ had unleashed during the anti-slavery campaigns in 1833 and 1838 (Colonial Office 1858). It was an appalling blunder on the part of Thomas Babington Macaulay when he sneeringly belittled the ‘bray’ of Exeter Hall; as he was sharply reminded, the animal that ‘could bray could also kick’. His imprudence helped to unseat him as MP for Edinburgh in 1847 (Cowan 1878: 214).

The belief of many voluntarists that they were locked in a struggle against the vested interests of an immoral establishment extended beyond the world of politics, religion and commerce to include the professions, very notably medicine, which they depicted as a monopoly that harmed the public interest and debased the moral standards of the nation. The Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons, which have been described as ‘defending only the perks and privileges of the metropolitan elite’, presented an obvious target (Porter 1999: 354), but the opposition was more deep-seated; there was a widespread distrust of contemporary medical practice. Sheltering behind their professional mysteries and a pharmacopeia in which alcoholic drinks, opiates and mercury-based medicaments featured prominently, doctors seemed to have formed an unholy alliance with the drink trade and vendors of dangerous drugs. Fortunately for mid-century voluntarists a remedy lay at hand; new and easily understood medical ‘sciences’ had recently become available, endorsing natural remedies and regimens that bypassed the vested interests and put the patient in charge of his or her own physical welfare: homeopathy, hydropathy, mesmerism, vegetarianism, phrenology and teetotalism. Samuel Brown, a scientist who had personal experience of the new treatments, coined a name for them that shows why they were attractive to many voluntarists: they were a ‘many-headed’ manifestation of ‘Physical Puritanism’. Ignoring the conventionally qualified doctors, people could enjoy good health and long life by following the rules of ‘clean living’ that these ‘sciences’ taught: personal hygiene, fresh air, diet, exercise and temperance (Brown 1852: 410). Voicing the millennial tone of many voluntarists, the *National Temperance Advocate* appealed to prophecy and forecast ‘a future peopled with beautiful forms of humanity. Our race, rising in the energy of science, literature, and religion, shall stand forth in the triple strength and grace of the highest physical, intellectual, and moral power’ (*National Temperance Advocate*, 1 March 1852).

What was emerging was a public sphere that would have been unimaginable a hundred years earlier. Writing in 1892, Henry Lorenzo Jephson saluted the rise of ‘the platform’ where voluntarists grafted ‘a system of democratic government on the ancient constitution of this kingdom’ in ‘an attempt at a solution of the great problem of popular government which has in recent times come into such commanding prominence’ (Jephson 1892: vol. 1, v). Voluntarists assumed the right to go over the head of Parliament and speak for the nation in this way. In 1838, for example, Lord Brougham referred to the resolutions of an Exeter Hall meeting as a declaration of ‘the will – the sovereign, the paramount, the irresistible will – of the people of England, Scotland, and Ireland that THE NEGRO SHALL BE FREE’ (*British Emancipator* 2 April 1838). Foreigners were often astounded by the vigour of this ‘platform’; in 1846 Frédéric Bastiat told Richard Cobden that the Anti-Corn Law League had brought ‘the art of agitation’ to a state of ‘perfection’ that was unknown in France (Bastiat 1855: vol. 1, 135). He was referring to one of the great gulfs between Continental Europe and Britain. Most Europeans of this era were not accustomed to the freedom of assembly and pressure grouping that Britons took for granted. When British peace congress activists proselytised in European cities during the 1840s they looked in vain for a comparable voluntarist empire. There were few suitable meeting places and it was necessary to obtain official permission to proceed. In countries where absolute monarchies held sway governments would not tolerate even a mild version of the British platform; the Prussian authorities, for example, suppressed a peace society in Königsberg. Then as now the Anglo-Saxon free market model troubled the minds of European politicians and intellectuals who were more attuned to *dirigiste* views such as those expressed in Friedrich List’s *National System of Political Economy* (1841).

With a sense of relief British voluntarists turned to the United States. ‘The Atlantic was now no more’, the National Temperance Society was told: ‘America and England could shake hands and unite in every object connected with the promotion of God’s glory and man’s welfare’ (*The Progressionist* 1853). British and American religious and moral reform societies borrowed heavily from each other’s example. Charles Finney, Lloyd Garrison, J. B. Gough, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, the Beecher family, the Tappan brothers and other American voluntarists were well known in Britain. Nonconformists often portrayed the separation of church and state in America as a model, and, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, Britons and Americans enjoyed a shared inheritance of free institutions through which public opinion could be expressed (de Tocqueville 2003: 220, 223). Nonetheless this special relationship was easily broken over issues relating to slavery. When British abolitionists discovered that the newly formed Free Church of Scotland had received financial support from American churches that countenanced slavery, they raised a ‘Send back the money’ outcry (Taylor 1974: 243). George Thompson’s skills as an anti-slavery orator in Britain were of little avail in America; he had to flee from mob violence and endure condemnation by President Jackson as one of the ‘emissaries from foreign parts who have dared to interfere in this matter’ (Thistlethwaite 1959: 110).

Although members of the upper classes appeared as patrons and in many instances offered more than mere patronage, one of the features of voluntary societies was the extent to which they drew their activists from groups that had

hitherto been confined to the periphery of social and political life. Representatives of opinion in Ireland, Scotland and the English provinces found a *point d'appui* in the voluntary societies. Daniel O'Connell was one of them. Best known as the Irish 'Liberator', he championed 'universal man' so thoroughly that much of his popularity arose from his role in the anti-slavery, Corn Law repeal, Aborigines Protection and other movements (*Speeches* 1839: 24). Some of the most acclaimed public speakers of the day owed their skills and reputation to their experience of the voluntary societies. Described by Lord Brougham as 'the most accomplished orator whom I know' (Stanton 1849: 240), George Thompson began his adult life as a clerk who spent his free time improving his education and frequenting the debating clubs of London. Thompson's speeches in which passionate flights of oratory blended religious references with pungent humour were attractive to middle-class, mainly Nonconformist, audiences, including the large numbers of women with whom he was an established favourite. The *Illustrated London News* saw him as one of the 'apostles of agitation' who could 'influence the councils of statesmen and of Legislatures': offering 'a contrast to the tumultuous and anarchical "Clubs" of the Continent', Thompson and others like him had made themselves a force in the land by learning how to combine fervour with a disciplined respect for the law that was 'characteristic of English public life in the 19th century' (*Illustrated London News* 17 February 1849).

The voluntarist platform often resembled a theatre where performances were choreographed for their dramaturgical effect. Evangelicals, most of whom would have blanched at the idea of attending a playhouse, enjoyed a colourful substitute through their membership of societies where the cult of the exotic was pursued on an almost Barnum and Bailey scale. The Wesleyan Missionary Society made much of a North American Indian chief who spoke of travelling over 'the great waters' to tell his British listeners how the missionaries had taught him how to pray to 'the Great Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ' (*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 1831). Middle Eastern Christians and converted Buddhist monks made their appearance in colourful costumes. Former slaves who were sufficiently articulate to tell their stories of suffering and salvation were firm favourites with British audiences. Some of the drama that enveloped voluntarist campaigns arose from the cut and thrust of the public confrontations that they provoked. Great schisms shattered the harmony of the anti-slavery and temperance movements, pitting activists who favoured gradual or moderate change against those who insisted on 'total and immediate' policies of reform.

Although the voluntarists used the language of liberation and self-empowerment, their platform was a highly gendered forum where the female voice was seldom heard in public until far into the century. Even Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was lionised when she toured Britain in 1853 after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, did not speak at the great gatherings that saluted her achievement; her husband and her brother spoke for her. The organisers were mindful of the precedent set at the world's anti-slavery convention in 1840 when female abolitionists arrived in London from the United States to participate as delegates. Amidst scenes of turmoil they were rebuked for violating the 'separate spheres' code of feminine propriety and confined to the role of observers (Tyrrell 1980: 194–98). At public meetings during this era women were customarily assigned segregated seating in



Figure 19.1 Charity Bazaar. *Illustrated London News*, 20 June 1874.

balconies or other areas from where they could witness but not participate in the proceedings.

The significance of the 1840 decision must not be overstated; women flocked to voluntarist meetings where they were seen as the standard bearers of religion and morality. This was not a token presence; women were encouraged to offer their unpaid assistance to the ever-growing number of religious and philanthropic societies. Hailed as the ‘Universal Sister’ (Hood 1850: 377), they were often organised in what were rather disparagingly called ‘auxiliaries’, but, as the Baptist Missionary Society Committee frankly admitted, women’s auxiliaries ‘have always been the most productive in proportion to their extent’ (*Baptist Missionary Society*

1820: 40). Their charity bazaars, tea parties and soirées were major fundraising events. These feminine roles were so important in community life that historians point to them as important influences on Victorian ideas of gender and class. Callum Brown has referred to a ‘feminisation of piety’ that enabled women to acquire ‘a moral agency over their own destinies, as well as developing a “space” . . . within which they cultivated a worldly role’ (Brown 2001: 58–59). R. J. Morris and Simon Morgan have shown how this ‘associational culture’ of both sexes contributed to the emergence and consolidation of class consciousness during the first half of the nineteenth century. In towns and cities across Britain the proliferating associations were constituents of a civil society in which middle-class men and women emerged as ‘a coherent and self-aware group’, providing for their own cultural and economic needs, defining their positions on public affairs and attempting the reform of society in accordance with their own values (Morris 2006: 144).

Although the attempt was made, it was soon evident that the men could not confine the women to secondary and suitably ‘feminine’ roles for uncontroversial religious and philanthropic objectives. In Morgan’s words, the public sphere was ‘an organic entity’ in which women were ‘constantly testing, negotiating and remaking boundaries’ (Morgan 2007: 4). Female abolitionists played a leading part in committing the anti-slavery movement to a policy of immediate emancipation. Two of the best-known popularisers of political economy, Harriet Martineau and Jane Marcet, were writers whose work was disseminated in support of the highly political campaign waged by the Anti-Corn Law League. Teams of women from all over Britain banded together to support the League’s great bazaars in Manchester and London. With mothers, daughters and nieces joining successive voluntarist societies and public campaigns during the early and mid-Victorian decades women steadily gained organisational experience and confidence. The teetotal movement made use of women speakers as early as the 1840s; at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Mary Carpenter spoke in favour of juvenile reformatories before an audience that included a former prime minister; members of women’s peace societies braved public ire by placarding cities with anti-war material at the time of the Indian Mutiny; and in the 1870s Josephine Butler cut a swath through contemporary taboos of gender by leading an agitation against the Contagious Diseases Acts, which abused the power of the state by inflicting medical examinations on women who were suspected of being prostitutes. ‘We rebel’ (Bristow 1977: 82): Butler’s cry would reverberate down the years. In the meanwhile other women moved into less controversial roles in the public education and Poor Law boards of the late nineteenth century.

Much of the driving force behind the middle-class societies came from their acceptance of a mission that a historian has described as ‘the civilization of the crowd’ (Golby and Purdue 1984: 3). Dismayed by the irreligion that vaunted itself around them and appalled by traditional pastimes such as bull-baiting, cockfighting and pugilism, evangelicals founded city missions and moral improvement societies to reach out to the masses. They were joined by advocates of liberal economics who feared for the consequences of leaving the labouring poor to their own devices. As the old society of ranks was replaced by the class society of an increasingly urbanised and industrialised nation where *laissez-faire* was the *leitmotif*, middle-

class voluntarists worked to create an ideal typical working class that would be suited to the emerging society and economy.

Their anxieties went beyond such practices as Saint Monday where the working week was interrupted by heavy drinking and socialising; they were alarmed to see workers threatening the free market by demanding government intervention in social and industrial matters. Pre-industrial society had recognised what E. P. Thompson has called ‘the shadowy image of a benevolent corporate state’ consisting of legislation that authorized price and wage fixing and regulated the admission of apprentices to trades (Thompson 1965: 543). This was supplemented by the Elizabethan Poor Law, which conferred a right to public assistance in case of need. Advocates of *laissez-faire* secured the repeal of many of these laws during the opening years of the century, but working men continued to invoke them, provoking the prime minister, Lord Liverpool, to tell parliament that ‘the people of this country’ would have to be taught that ‘the greater part of the miseries of which human nature complained, were, in all times and in all countries, beyond the control of human legislature’ (Flinn 1964: 187). In 1834 the economic modernisers struck their hardest blow when they introduced the New Poor Law to administer relief in accordance with a workhouse test that was calculated to deter applicants.

An immense variety of voluntary societies pressed forward to teach the poor the sort of lessons that Lord Liverpool had in mind. The outcome was not a narrowly conceived version of economic man, for this was a point at which the ideals of the Enlightenment and the evangelical revival converged on a concept of personal independence in which there was a strong infusion of religious and moral values. In Geoffrey Best’s words ‘divinity and economics ran together’ to create the ideal typical working man who accepted ‘the doctrine of the free choice’, which held that men must make the most of their resources and bear the burden of their mistakes and misfortunes (Best 1971: 257–58). Teetotalism was one of the voluntarist movements that fostered this ideal. In Preston, their ‘Bethlehem’, total abstainers created what was almost a self-contained community where they had their own premises (initially a converted cockpit); rituals for birth, death and marriage; social functions; a reading room and baths. They even had their own section of the town cemetery (Tyrrell 2004: 127–45).

There remained the problem of those who lacked the resources to cope with life’s burdens. For them there were the alternatives of private charity and the New Poor Law. These were not attractive alternatives; nor were they meant to be. The Rev Tuckniss neatly categorised his list of voluntary societies as ‘Curative Agencies’, ‘Preventive Agencies’, ‘Repressive and Punitive Agencies’ and ‘Reformative Agencies’ (Tuckniss 1968: xviii–xl). He was offering a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor that voluntarists struggled to enforce. They had denounced the Elizabethan Poor Law for encouraging a mentality of dependency; now they feared that an army of feckless mendicants would pick its way like locusts through the proliferating charities. As early as 1803 Thomas Malthus had warned that charity must be based on knowledge of the beneficiary’s circumstances and a reciprocal sense of obligation (Roberts 1998: 74–75). During the second half of the century similar strictures were prompted by conditions in London, where, in Gareth Stedman Jones’s words, fears of social breakdown were linked to the

belief that ‘a promiscuous compound of indiscriminate alms giving and careless Poor Law relief’ had demoralised the poor and removed an appropriate sense of obligation to wealthy benefactors. Exhibiting many of the most characteristic features of the voluntarist mentality, the Charity Organization Society attempted to remedy this ‘deformation of the gift’ (Jones 1976: 243–52). Its aims were described in 1875 as being to cooperate with other charities and the Poor Law authorities to investigate requests for assistance, to promote ‘habits of providence and self-reliance’, to instil ‘social and sanitary principles’ and to repress ‘mendicity and imposture’ (Mowat 1961: 25–26). Its mode of operation was to introduce a face-to-face relationship between donor and recipient by building up case studies of the applicants. Ideally help would take the form of tools, work clothing and other means of self-support.

Much of the preaching about the virtues of independence was a form of social control that middle- and upper-class activists directed at the working class, but this was by no means the whole story. There was a strong working-class culture based on ideals of self-improvement that differed from those of middle-class voluntarists, whose mentality was powered by what Gwynn Williams calls ‘the thrust of evangelicalism and political economy’ (Williams 1971: x). With its six points, the Chartist programme was intended to create a democratic polity as the basis for the good society, and it drew on widespread opposition to the economic theories that underlay the New Poor Law. Owenites looked forward to the day when there would be a socialist ‘New Moral World’. Nonetheless there was a considerable overlap between Chartists, Owenites and the voluntary movements discussed so far. Chartist branches often promoted education, teetotalism and other forms of self-improvement. As for the Owenites, Barbara Taylor has called many of their activities ‘a collective bootstrap-pulling operation’ in which there was an infusion of ‘puritan zeal for personal reform, combined with a burning thirst for “useful knowledge” and social respectability’ (Taylor 1983: 222).

Autobiographies and social surveys show how desperately some working-class people struggled to maintain a sense of self-worth against almost overwhelming odds of poverty and hardship. Walking through the grim streets of mid-Victorian Ipswich, John Glyde was impressed by ‘determined struggles’ amounting to ‘moral heroism of a high cast’ in a significant minority of working-class houses where whitened doorsteps, muslin curtains, ornaments, a bible, potted plants and other evidence of ‘taste and simple elegance’ were exhibited (Glyde 1850: 48–49). This was the age par excellence of the mutual improvement society where working-class autodidacts cooperated in a variety of self-education projects. It was also the age of the Sunday school where working-class children were instructed by teachers such as Emanuel Lovekin, a Primitive Methodist mining ‘butty’ whose life has been described as ‘the “classic” story of self-education, hard work and religious faith’ (Burnett 1977: 289–96). By the end of the nineteenth century, writes Jonathan Rose, ‘working class culture was saturated by the spirit of mutual education’, enabling some to rise up the social hierarchy and others such as Ramsay Macdonald to emerge as working-class leaders (Rose 2002: 83, 61). A similar spirit of sturdy independence inspired the friendly societies, the new model trade unions of skilled workers and the cooperative associations for production and retail. ‘Sickness, Accident, Relief of Widow, Superannuation’: an emblem of the United Society of

Boilermakers indicated the sort of support that members obtained from their subscriptions to the friendly societies and trade unions of this era (Leeson 1971: 33). The example set by middle-class voluntarists, one might say, was being appropriated by large sections of the working classes, but, as a recent historian of the friendly societies has shown, their highly publicised emphasis on respectability was not an act of deference to the higher classes; it was part of a strategy for keeping others at a distance (Cordery 2003: 1, 5–6). The cooperative movement was similarly based on the principle of rejecting interference from governments or other outsiders. Originating with the 40 ‘Pioneers’ of Rochdale who pooled their resources in 1844 to buy basic household items, the movement had 1,707,000 members by 1900 whose needs were served by a network of shops, factories and other enterprises that offered an alternative to the dominant version of the capitalist economy (Birchall 1994: viii, 42, 65, 83, 87). George Jacob Holyoake spoke of cooperatives as societies that rejected any ‘obligation to charity, to philanthropy, to patronage, to the capitalist or the State, nor need the dubious aim of revolution’ (Gurney 1988: 62). In such ways voluntarism helped to create a form of working-class consciousness that was vigorously independent but compatible with the values of a cohesive society.

This was the world in which Samuel Smiles devised his *Self-Help*, one of the best known voluntarist texts of the century. Its genesis brought together many of the most important aspects of voluntarism. Smiles’s family belonged to a Presbyterian sect that had seceded from the Church of Scotland during the eighteenth century and provided some of the most vehement religious voluntarists during the early Victorian era. He spent his childhood and youth in East Lothian, an early centre of movements for public libraries and mechanics institutes where he was influenced by G. L. Craik’s *Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties*, a collection of biographical sketches of self-educated men. Attracted to the new ‘sciences’ of Physical Puritanism, Smiles wrote his first book, *Physical Education: Or the Nurture and Management of Children*, under the influence of phrenology, and considered a career in homeopathic practice before becoming the editor of the *Leeds Times*, a radical newspaper in which he challenged all the monopolies, including those that discriminated against women (Tyrrell 2000: 185–216). ‘The struggle . . . [was] between Aristocracy and Democracy, between Privilege and the People, between Monopoly and Industry, between old Feudalism and modern Civilization’ (*Leeds Times*, 22 May 1841). By then he had converted to Unitarianism, a rational religious creed that served as one of the conduits of Enlightenment ideas in the nineteenth century and introduced him to the writings of W. E. Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who used the term ‘self-help’ to describe the characteristics that exhibited the dignity and equality of the individual. Smiles supported voluntary education projects in Leeds, and for a time he edited the *Oddfellows’ Magazine*, a friendly society publication. *Self-Help*, which was published in 1859, originated as lectures that he had delivered at the Holbeck and New Wortley Youths’ Guardian Society in 1843 and the Leeds Mutual Improvement Society in 1845. Like Smith and Mill, Smiles repudiated complete laissez-faire – his book *Thrift* (1875) demanded legislation to establish proper sanitary conditions for Britain’s growing population – but the young editor metamorphosed into a successful railway executive who accepted the institutions of

mid-Victorian Britain. There was a harsher tone than the one he had adopted in the 1840s: his famous catchphrase, ‘Heaven helps those who help themselves’, was supplemented by an ugly corollary, ‘Misfortune is next door to Stupidity’ (Smiles 1958: 35, 266).

There were always critics of voluntarism and the values that underpinned it. Some were appalled by the crude laissez-faire ideas that some Nonconformist spokesmen injected into their vision of the good society. For the *Voluntary Church Magazine* a church establishment harmed religion in the same way that business monopolies harmed the national economy: ‘Every thing in trade and legislation, in the church and in the state, must one day come to this, – “The best article at the lowest possible price!”’ (*Voluntary Church Magazine* 1838). The Voluntary Schools Society and Edward Miall’s Liberation Society adopted variants of this language. In 1841, when feelings were running high in Birmingham, some of the voluntarists barged into vestry meetings and outvoted a proposed church rate after subjecting the church wardens to ribald interjections on such matters as the vicar’s expenditure on sacramental wine. Other critics of voluntarism focused on the self-righteousness of evangelical philanthropists. Stephen’s ‘age of societies’ was George Grote’s ‘age of *steam and cant*’ (Grote 1873: 133). The Rev Sydney Smith ridiculed the social blinkers of the Society for the Suppression of Vice: its name should be changed to ‘a society for suppressing the vices of persons whose income does not exceed £500 per annum’ (Bell 1982: 72). Charles Dickens created Mrs Jellaby and Mrs Pardiggle as repellent exponents of evangelical philanthropy, and his *Household Words* mocked the ‘whole hogs’ who had ‘discovered that mankind at large can only be regenerated by a Tee-Total Society, or by a Peace Society, or by always dining on Vegetables’ (*Household Words*, 1851). One of the strongest criticisms of voluntarism was that some of its most ardent exponents held back attempts to remedy major social problems. For decades Nonconformist pressure groups blocked legislation to create a national public education system, and the friendly societies opposed the provision of state pensions and social insurance even for those who were most in need.

By the end of the nineteenth century voluntarists had enjoyed many successes. Britain was a free trade country and many grievances had been removed. An obituary of Edward Miall noted that he had helped to abolish church rates and university tests as well as opening parish burial grounds to Dissenters. As the presence in Parliament of Richard Cobden, John Bright, George Thompson and other middle-class voluntarists had shown, the regime of privilege was giving way to *la carrière ouverte aux talents*. Nonetheless there was a swing towards a different set of values during the last quarter of the century. By then Exeter Hall was no longer a centre of evangelical public life, and when Thompson died in 1878 he was described as the representative of ‘a special class of accomplished speakers the like of whom scarcely now remain in public view’ (*Illustrated London News*, 19th October 1878). The growing strength of foreign commercial rivals undermined the belief that the free market served Britain’s interests, and spokesmen for groups that had offered voluntarism as the solution for the nation’s social problems now admitted its inadequacies. In 1883 Andrew Mearns, Secretary of the London Congregational Union, wrote his *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, rebuking Christians for ‘dreaming that the millennium was coming’ while all around them ‘the poor

have been growing poorer' (Mearns 1976: 92). Social inquiries, notably by Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, gave substance to his analysis. In the early years of the new century the Liberal Party, once a bastion of voluntarism, embarked on reforms that foreshadowed the welfare state of the 1940s.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE PERFORMANCE OF CITIZENSHIP



Rohan McWilliam

Other things being equal, yesterday's institutions are by far the best for today.

Walter Bagehot 1867: 10

In the later nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for Brazilian liberals to celebrate the influence of British or (as they would probably have said) English political thought. Victorian sages such as Mill, Spencer, Carlyle and Macaulay were regularly cited as part of the project to modernise their nation. Rui Barbosa, the lawyer who helped write the nation's constitution when it became a republic in 1890, claimed: 'In the press, in parliament, on the speaker's platform, England has always been the great teacher for my liberal principles' (Graham 1968: 269). Joaquim Nabuco, founder of the nation's Liberal Party, also once declared: 'I am an English liberal . . . in the Brazilian parliament' (Graham 1968: 263).

Given Britain's domination of the global system in the nineteenth century, such Anglophilia is not altogether surprising. Victorian Britain was a success story to be emulated. Despite the stresses of industrialisation and urbanisation, it did not experience a political revolution. Instead, the British aristocracy adapted to the age of the masses and came to view liberal solutions as the best solutions, leading to a perfect social compromise. But how much did this comfortable image reflect the actual nature of British statecraft? In the 1840s, there were fears of revolution and social breakdown. This chapter analyses political structures of feeling in the nineteenth century. A work of this length cannot hope to be comprehensive or do full justice to its theme. It does, however, seek to describe some of the world views that shaped the age of Peel, Gladstone, Robert Owen and the Chartists.

We instinctively look to the nineteenth century to explain the origins of modern British politics. The Victorian period witnessed the rise of democracy and the creation of formal, bureaucratically organised political parties as well as party labels we recognise today (Conservative, Liberal, Labour). But the guiding assumptions of the Victorian world were different from our own. The focus here will be on the ways Victorian political culture often failed to anticipate the shape of politics after 1900. I emphasise particularly the role of the constitution

and the concept of 'independence' as keys to the nineteenth-century political mind. These certainly had their echoes in the world after 1901 but they did not mean the same thing.

An overview like this courts the danger of presenting Victorian political culture as essentially static. The opposite was in fact the case. Political identities, alliances and strategies were continually in flux throughout the century, subject to the contingencies of political events such as the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 or the issue of Home Rule in 1886. Political ideas, languages and strategies varied across classes and regions. The politics of London, for example, contrasted with the North of England, the rural with the urban. There is also the problem of presenting political world views as coherent and well thought out ideologies. Political traditions were in reality diffuse and contradictory. Mapping modern assumptions about party political behaviour onto Victorian politics misrepresents the reality. Party discipline barely existed in the way it did after 1900. We might do better to talk of the liberal or Tory temperament rather than any clear party philosophy. Frequently, the differences between the parties were matters of emphasis, degree or nuance, rather than clashing ideologies. Tories brandished their paternalist credentials but so did many Whig politicians. On many issues, Whigs and Tories found little to disagree. Politics up to mid century was often determined by connections, patronage and locality. The whole idea of political parties (with their distinct loyalties and opposition for the sake of opposition) remained suspect for the Victorians. And yet, as will become clear, political ideas mattered during the nineteenth century, not least because they shaped the image that politicians projected.

This chapter is divided into an examination of high politics (the world of Westminster) and popular politics. This does not mean that the two were completely separate. Victorian Britain was a heavily polarised society in many respects, fissured by differences of income, social class and ethnicity. Yet there were forces that bound it together as well, including national identity, religion and the civic spirit. A three-dimensional approach needs to recognise the forces of social consensus alongside the moment of conflict. During the nineteenth century, a set of relationships between parliament and people emerged that was ritualised, fractious, subject to dissolution and remaking but which helps explain why Britain avoided the kind of political revolutions that engulfed other countries in Europe during the nineteenth century. It was this culture that secured the admiration of politicians in Brazil and around the world.

HIGH POLITICS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONSTITUTIONALISM

Most of the old Houses of Parliament were burnt down by a fire in 1834. The largely new structure that replaced it helps us to understand the dominant political culture. It emerged from the inspired collaboration between the architects Charles Barry and Augustus Welby Pugin. The parliamentary committee who commissioned them decided that the new building should be in the gothic style. The alternative would have been to build in the classical style of Greece and Rome, as had been adopted by legislatures in the United States, a style that harked back to Athenian democracy. The oblong shape of the Lords and Commons reproduced the former



THE WORKING-MAN, FROM THE ROYAL WESTMINSTER EXHIBITION.

450. THE WORKING-MAN	-	-	-	John Bright.	1001. THE WORKING-MAN	-	-	-	Edward Horman.
451. THE WORKING-MAN	-	-	-	W. E. Forster.	1002. THE WORKING-MAN	-	-	-	R. Lowe.

Figure 20.1 *Punch*, May 20 1865: Different ways of imagining working-class men in the Age of Equipoise

layout in which opposing rows of seats for government and opposition encouraged polarised forms of debate, as opposed to the semi-circles of other national assemblies, which made for consensus (McCormack 2007: 22). There were also complaints by MPs that the shape privileged the front bench over back benchers and, as Roland Quinault points out, ‘made no allowance for subtle shades of opinion’ (Quinault 1992: 90). The Palace of Westminster housed a political world that remained remarkably exclusive throughout the nineteenth century. MPs did not receive a salary until 1911 and usually had to underwrite the expenses incurred in election contests, which made it difficult even for many middle-class men to serve in Parliament.

The new palace was also based on a particular interpretation of the English constitution. To understand the Victorian political world is to grapple with the different ways that the constitution was understood. It is, of course, unwritten but is usually held to be based on the distribution of power between the monarch, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. As David Cannadine has observed, the architecture of the Palace of Westminster was based on the constitution in that all three parts had to be represented (Cannadine 2002). There was a special entrance for the monarch (to be employed for the state opening of parliament) and the sumptuous designs for the House of Lords celebrated aristocratic leadership. The palace was cluttered with statues of sovereigns through the ages and the House of Lords contained a throne designed by Pugin for royal visits (Quinault 1992: 82). On the other hand, the Houses of Parliament were not designed as a home for democracy. The House of Commons was so small that not all MPs could sit down when it was full. Seating for the public and the press was limited. The sight lines of the building were such that when the Queen opened Parliament, she could be seen from the speaker’s chair in the Commons, reminding the latter where authority lay (Quinault 1992: 84). It was a stage for the Tory interpretation of the constitution.

Toryism held that the constitution validated traditional hierarchies, which guaranteed stability and order. As Edmund Burke emphasised, it was respect for authority that held society together. The Tory worldview thus celebrated paternalism, which allowed the rich (especially the landed elite) to gain legitimacy through looking after the poor. Tories also viewed the constitution as not only Protestant but Anglican in nature. Thus it was right that bishops represented the Church of England in the Lords and that the church should be defended from all dangers. Even at the end of the century, Lord Salisbury despised Nonconformists as they threatened to undermine Anglicanism in his view; it was an effort for him to conceive of citizenship as something that did not include membership of the Church of England (Bentley 2001: 205). The pre-1832 confessional state remained part of the mental furniture of Tories for much of the nineteenth century.

Toryism was defined by what it was against: radicalism. ‘Progress’ (however defined) was to be met with a raised eyebrow, especially if it smacked of anything reminiscent of the French revolution. Tried and tested solutions handed down through the generations offered a better path to the future than dubious abstract ideas about the rights of man. The local squire could be trusted in a way that the radical demagogue could not. Thus Toryism stood for the defence of the landed interest as the best basis for strong national government. This might sound like a narrow basis for a political party even with a restricted franchise. On the other hand, it allowed the Tories to stand for rural England and thus to represent a large

part of the nation. Robert Peel, however, expanded the Tory vision to include towns and cities, and the paternalist style did not prevent Tories from embracing laissez-faire individualism and a strong pro-business outlook. Tory MPs included large landowners but also lawyers, brewers, bankers and army officers. Disraeli and Lord Salisbury subsequently came to emphasise empire, the union with Ireland, the defence of private property and the romance of the national heritage in formulating a Toryism that could obtain mass support. Toryism was not just for toffs.

However, the Tories were not in power for much of the Victorian period (even though they were often the largest grouping in Parliament and enjoyed political ascendancy after 1886). The alternative to Toryism was the diffuse world of Whig liberalism. The Whig view, ascendant in the 1830s, believed in moderate reform. It argued that the British state during the wars with France up to 1815 had diminished popular liberties, increased corruption and left the nation burdened with unjust taxation. Whig aristocrats presented themselves as custodians of the people's interests. Although they accepted that the franchise needed to be extended in 1832, they did not believe that the working class should be included. The Liberal Party from 1859 onwards pushed this tradition in more radical directions as we will see. Both Whigs and Liberals, however, shared an interpretation of the constitution. For them, it made for liberty (hence liberalism), a model of balance and harmony.

They agreed that the constitution was based on the separation of powers between monarch, Lords and Commons but what was admirable about this arrangement was that it prevented arbitrary rule: if one part of the constitution got too powerful, it could be restrained by the other two parts. This is broadly what had happened in the two revolutions of the seventeenth century (1649 and 1688) and the result was a constitutional settlement in which the monarch ruled through the consent of parliament. History therefore mattered as much for the Whigs as it did for the Tories, although commentators such as Walter Bagehot demonstrated that the separation of powers model has never existed in the pure form that Whig theorists believed (Bagehot (2001) [1867]: [Chapter 1](#)). The Whig-liberal world was founded on classical republicanism, which located virtue in ordinary citizens and regarded centralised forms of authority as inherently prone to corruption. Victorian liberalism in effect offered a view of Britain as a republic, which was so confident in its freedoms that it could afford to have a monarchy as well. Whilst Tories stressed the defence of Anglicanism, Liberals took a less dogmatic view, attempting to bring non-Anglican groups into the political nation, which is why liberal (and thus Victorian) Britain really commenced with the destruction of the confessional state: the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829. In contrast to the English basis of Toryism, Liberals presented themselves as a party that drew support from all four parts of the United Kingdom and appealed to all classes. Thus from the 1790s onwards, Whigs became associated with the view that Parliament has to be receptive to the views of 'public opinion'. This novel concept shaped the trajectory of Victorian politics; the liberal outlook increasingly defined the public sphere. However, in the early nineteenth century, 'public opinion' tended to mean the views of middle-class males, essentially the kind of people who got the vote in 1832. It was reasonable to ignore the views of people who were not middle class because independence was a dominant idea in Victorian culture.

Independence meant two things: property holding and manliness. Property holding was important as a voting qualification because it demonstrated that electors had a stake in the country's future. This meant in theory that they were less prone to corruption; hence property holding led to the exercise of independence. The independent, manly voter would not be swayed by special interests but would vote for the good of the country (modelled on the classical republican model of the virtuous citizen). This was the essence of Victorian political culture and is one of the ways in which it differs from the political culture that developed after 1918. It explains why the inclusion of lodgers in the 1867 Reform Bill was controversial because they were (often) single men living in someone else's house and therefore dependent, not independent (McClelland 2000: 99). The franchise was also based on 'virtual representation'. In other words, the minority of the population who were electors voted on behalf of those who did not have the vote; the latter were in effect included in the franchise through the votes of the former. It was reasonable to exclude women and the poor from the franchise because they did not possess the kind of independence conferred by property; they could too easily be swayed by corrupt special interests (an argument that skated over the uncomfortable fact that unmarried women could own property). The figure of the respectable working man who became so important to the parliamentary reform debates of the mid-Victorian period was the popular response to this culture of manly independence. He was a worker possessed of self-control who possessed property through his skill and often through actual property ownership. His independence was a mark of 'character' (another important category in Victorian political thought). The gradual elimination of property holding as the main qualification for the franchise after the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884–85 made the dependence of the vote on gender more stark, setting the stage for the female suffrage campaigns of the Edwardian period.

The concept of independence played a strong role in parliamentary politics in another sense. Most MPs claimed to be independent at some stage or another (although the number of self-styled independents declined in the wake of the Great Reform Act). After 1832, a two-party system became more evident at Westminster but party labels were associated with a broad belief in principles rather than detailed manifesto commitments. It was not until the later nineteenth century that party whips really began to exert any kind of authority over MPs and the idea of opposition for the sake of opposition (a practice disliked since the eighteenth century) began to acquire legitimacy. The shadow cabinet, for example, did not come into existence until the early twentieth century; opposition during Victoria's reign took a less systematic and organised form (Jenkins 1996: 118).

The notion of independence suffused liberal culture. Liberals viewed intrusive state power as the enemy of freedom. There was less emphasis on paternalism (associated with Toryism) and more on trying to create a framework in which people could strive to fulfil their potential. This was the free market economy. Liberals would hymn the virtues of *laissez-faire* and cheap government. Removing the state's presence from people's lives (for example, through unnecessary taxation) was the essence of liberty, although they also opposed authoritarian and despotic governments abroad. Britain's Protestantism seemed to secure the kind of discipline that allowed free institutions to flourish. Liberalism stood for individualism; it opposed systems of paternalism that prevented people from striving

to maintain themselves (the basis of Poor Law reform in 1834). However, liberals could countenance social reform measures, which included state intervention, on a case-by-case basis. For example, the provision of education (if necessary by the state) was a means of cultivating the interests of society at large and served the national interest. The success of the mid-Victorian economy seemed to vindicate liberal principles and explains why Brazilian liberals so admired British political culture.

Liberals wanted to transform the eighteenth-century state, which was riddled with corruption and patronage. They were nurtured by the ‘Philosophical Radicals’ of the early Victorian period (such as Edwin Chadwick) who sought to implement the Utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, and by the ‘Manchester School’ (epitomised by John Bright and Richard Cobden) who championed free trade and opposed aristocratic monopolies. They wanted to reform institutions by judging whether they were efficient or not. Liberals desired cheap government in which public and private jobs should go to those people best equipped to perform them and not to people who obtained positions through nepotism or bribery. Theirs was a vision of careers open to talent.

In this sense, British liberalism was part of the wider history of European (but also global) liberalism, which took as its founding texts the works of British thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith. Continental liberals attacked unearned privilege and unreasonable monopolies both in the political and the economic world. British liberalism became politically ascendant in the 1830s, just the moment when liberal forces were asserting themselves throughout Europe. Moreover, whilst continental liberalism was in retreat after the 1848 revolutions, the British version was able to trumpet its success in avoiding revolution through social and political reform. Like continental liberals, British liberals feared the disruptive potential of the working class but they went on to develop a relationship with the labour movement, which endured up to 1914.

Victorian political arguments were part of a larger reaction to the American and French revolutions, which placed on the political agenda issues about the representativeness of institutions, the right of resistance, the scope of taxation, the legitimacy of elites, the nature of citizenship and, of course, democracy. This is why ‘reform’ became a key word in politics from the 1780s onwards and remained so for most of the nineteenth century. During the long eighteenth century (lasting up to 1815), the British state had regularly been at war and had developed a huge tax raising apparatus in order to fund its military commitments. Politics after 1815 was shaped by the question of what to do with this huge state edifice, which liberals and radicals complained was bloated with corruption and excessive taxation that hit the poor. The early and mid-Victorian eras were distinctive for the shift towards a *laissez-faire* state in which cheap government and retrenchment were the dominant themes. The state needed to get out of the way and let the market rip; anything that interfered with the laws of supply and demand was viewed sceptically. The free market was viewed as a truly moral force that would discipline society in a positive way (Hilton 1988). Thus the great liberal economic cause became free trade, championed by the Anti-Corn Law League. Its leaders, Richard Cobden and John Bright, became harbingers of the new political consensus. However, political labels can often be unhelpful here; many of the exponents of free trade before 1850

were Tories and, after the early 1850s, most people acknowledged there could be no return to economic protectionism.

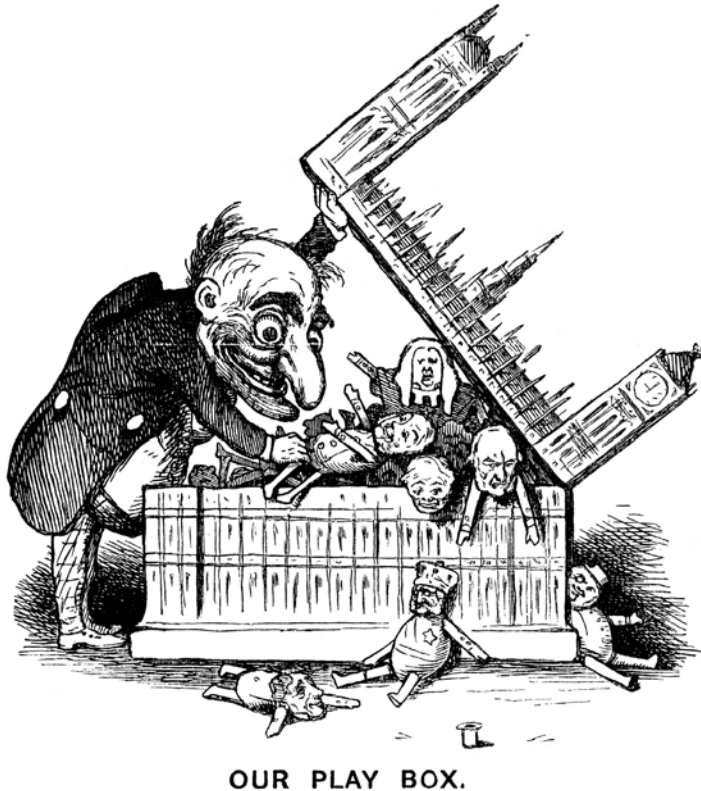
During the 1830s, social reform came onto the parliamentary agenda and never really left it. The British population was expanding as were towns and cities. Political questions were raised about how to manage the problems that this caused: the long hours that many men and women were forced to work, the slum housing, the new workhouse system, the insanitary conditions that helped spread cholera, the fate of the elderly or the unemployed ('those who will not work'). The social problems of the industrial age meant that parliament after 1830 had to pass legislation far more than it had previously done, as well as develop the apparatus of Royal Commissions and Blue Books that became part of the expansion of the Victorian state. Following the Reform Act of 1867, politicians found that in order to get elected, they had to offer specific social reforms to the electorate rather than stand for broad principles. The masses began to change the culture of the palace of Westminster.

POPULAR POLITICS

Were the politics of the people outside Westminster completely divorced from high politics? In some respects, these were distinct worlds. Debates amongst pampered and well-fed members of the elite (at Westminster or in comfortable armchairs at the Reform Club) are by their very nature different from those of people fighting to keep poverty and the workhouse at bay. Moreover, the world of popular politics accounts for very different sets of experiences: the cultures of middle- and working-class politics often contrasted, there were local political traditions that varied across the United Kingdom. It is difficult to talk about politics without reference to social class. Popular movements began to develop languages based not only on class but the importance of solidarity and resistance.

However, there were forces that drew the political nation together. Among these was the press, which expanded during the nineteenth century and achieved a mass readership, allowing the nation at large to follow political developments not just in Westminster but in their locality. Victorian newspapers devoted extensive space to parliamentary debates and to verbatim reports of politician's speeches. They developed a national following for figures such as Palmerston, Gladstone and Disraeli. The cults of these and other politicians helped define politics for a mass audience. *Punch* (read mainly by the middle class) featured cartoons of politicians, which made them familiar and lovable rather than austere and distant. The age of personality politics had arrived. Whilst Walter Bagehot conceded that the press could not bring about change, he also argued that 'The *Times* has made many ministries because at times of political crisis, effective articles in great journals become of essential moment' (Bagehot 2001 [1867]: 18). Radical newspapers such as the Chartist *Northern Star* in the 1840s helped construct a working-class public sphere, developing an audience for democratic arguments and building a movement culture. Individual branches wrote to the paper about their activities so that individual readers realised that there were other people who shared their viewpoint.

To understand the wider political culture of the Victorians, it is important to recognise that local politics mattered as much as national politics. There was a



OUR PLAY BOX.
MR. PUNCH'S DELIGHT AT FINDING HIS DEAR OLD PUPPETS WHERE HE LEFT
THEM IN JULY.

Figure 20.2 *Punch* 11 February 1865: Parliament represented
as a puppet show

strong distrust of centralisation that ran through liberalism. Power was to be dispersed to the locality. The Victorian period was a great age of local government evident in the town halls that were built all over the country, commencing with the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. The middle classes took over the running of the cities. Despite the resistance of many ratepayers, local politics transformed systems of sanitation and improved the provision of roads and transportation

Middle-class political influence became evident not just through local government but also through pressure groups. The prototype for these was the campaign against the slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century, whose eventual success demonstrated the effectiveness of lobbying and the deployment of propaganda. The classic Victorian pressure group, however, was the Anti-Corn Law League. During the 1840s the League, led by John Bright and Richard Cobden, developed new forms of campaigning, including mass mailing and canvassing. It was succeeded by pressure groups that campaigned for specific causes such as state education or the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1870s and 1880s.

The League not only helped tilt financial policy in the direction of free trade through helping secure the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846; it also proved to be the incubator of the mass liberalism that flourished during the mid-Victorian period. At a popular level, liberalism possessed some of the outlook of the parliamentary Whigs but constituted itself as a more dramatic reforming presence in the life of the nation. The Liberals were able to command a large popular following with their slogan: 'Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform'. Liberals at the popular level came to stand not only for free trade but also for moderate democratic reform as well as laissez-faire, small government and the virtues of sobriety, self-help and hard work. This was a culture nurtured by religious Nonconformity, which provided it with a language of mission and a determination to identify and correct abuses both at home and abroad (it was particularly evident in the Bulgarian Atrocities agitation in 1876).

Popular liberalism was suffused with the language of independence. John Vincent famously put it thus:

For the nineteenth-century man, the mark or note of being fully human was that he should provide for his own family, have his own religion and politics, and call no man master. It is as a mode of entry into this full humanity that the Gladstonian Liberal party most claims our respect.

(Vincent 1966: xiii)

The improving vision of respectable liberals frequently shaded off into the more challenging world of Victorian radicalism.

To explore the world of popular radicalism is again to encounter the importance of the constitution, the passion for which was not confined to Westminster. Radicals were devoted to what James Epstein calls 'the constitutionalist idiom' (Epstein 1994). On the platform, radicals proclaimed that they were acting on behalf of a constitution hallowed by history and heritage. The Anglo-Saxon constitution had been essentially democratic, according to this view; all men in the age of Alfred the Great participated in political decisions. This polity was destroyed by the so-called 'Norman Yoke' in 1066, leading to the domination of the aristocracy who maintained a stranglehold over political power and excluded the common people. As the radical W. J. Linton complained in verse:

We've had our scions of misrule,
Of the illegitimate Norman school,
Who've laid our husbandmen in bond –
Like eels pent up in shallow pond . . .

(Maidment 1987: 77)

The task of radicals was to restore this imagined democratic polity, which is why their language and thought can seem backward looking. The inspiration of Thomas Paine offered an alternative argument based on natural law and the 'Rights of Man' rather than the Anglo-Saxon constitution. However, radicals failed to shake off the constitutionalist idiom not least because it offered a patriotic frame for their arguments, which appealed strongly to popular culture and provided a defence

against charges of disloyalty. Their worldview was fundamentally that of the industrious (people who made things and generated wealth) versus the idle (the aristocracy). Radicals were not necessarily anti-capitalist or hostile to the middle classes (although they sometimes were). Self-help was a given; as the Manchester masons put it in 1850: 'no reform, however democratic, can improve the condition of those who are not willing to make an effort in their own amelioration' (Hewitt 1996: 217). However, there was a strong belief that employers had duties (to provide education and leisure facilities) just as much as workers, a view that helped facilitate a new kind of urban paternalist politics in some northern cities (Hewitt 1996: 202–3). For this reason, radicals should not be seen unproblematically as the ancestors of twentieth-century socialists or even social democrats (still less as progenitors of modern anti-state conservatism). They had a distinctive vision, which made sense in terms of the realities they confronted.

The radical platform consisted of an argument that the solution to social and economic distress was democracy. It became a massive lament about the exclusion of the majority of the people from the pale of the constitution. The political culture of the Chartists was shaped by eighteenth-century radicalism. From the 1770s, radicals began to make a series of democratic demands: universal manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, the secret ballot, the payment of MPs, annual elections and equal electoral districts. These arguments thrived in the artisan's workshop where skilled workers saw themselves as freeborn Englishmen who needed to be protected from interference by an unjust state that exerted taxation without representation. Tailors, shoemakers, cabinetmakers and other skilled professions responded to this kind of political programme but it registered more widely among the working classes. We hear this same kind of anti-'Old Corruption' radicalism in an address of the Manchester Political Union in 1838: 'No man possessing an ordinary understanding can entertain a doubt that the cause of our present suffering is the enormous amount of taxes which the government compels us to pay for the support of its army, its placemen, its pensioners etc., and for the payment of its interest on its debt' (Hewitt 1996: 207). Radicalism fed on libertarian arguments about independence.

However, whilst this package of democratic demands was remarkably enduring, radicalism was also shaped by calls for social and economic change. Education, food, clothing, shelter and satisfying forms of recreation for the common people needed to be provided (although there were divergent views on how this should happen). Radicalism found its voice denouncing the long hours worked by men, women and children in factories and the iniquities of the workhouse system after 1834. It proclaimed the importance of fairness, epitomised in the trade union slogan, 'A fair day's work for a fair day's wage'. Fairness was a particular issue because trade unions were illegal (or enjoyed an ambiguous legal status) for much of the nineteenth century.

Up to the 1850s, popular radicalism was based on direct action. Its methods included the mass meeting and the petition, which made it an exercise in the creation of a democratic culture. There was a shift from earlier plebeian forms of resistance such as incendiarism and machine breaking towards campaigning at a national level through the development of relatively mature political organisations such as Chartism. However, even Chartism was frightening because it contained

the possibility of physical force and was discredited by the Newport Rising of 1839 and by the Plug Riots in 1842. The traditional tactics of radicalism were increasingly undermined during the 1840s, leading to new forms of mass politics based on support for Westminster's political parties and for trade unions in the later nineteenth century, for reformism rather than revolution. This shift after mid century reflected a reconsideration of political strategy as the state proved more responsive to change than early Victorian radicals had allowed. The repeal of the Corn Laws and factory legislation suggested that change could be effected through Westminster even if the franchise remained restricted; the state was elevated above narrow class interests that transformed the nature of political debate in the age of equipoise (Jones 1983: 176–77).

Many radicals attempted to create a new way of living. The activities offered by Chartist and other radical organisations such as the Owenites and the cooperative movement pushed beyond the boundaries of liberalism and offered a new democratic, associational culture. There were Chartist schools, shops and chapels. But radical culture throughout the century also boasted lectures, tea parties, burial clubs, public dinners, dramatic societies, secularist speakers and temperance meetings as well as dinners to commemorate the lives of radical heroes such as Thomas Paine. There were advocates of birth control, republicanism, spiritualism and vegetarianism. Political agitation could also provide a job (the 'trade of agitation') through writing and bookselling or through the trade union movement, although the latter was restricted to skilled workers up to the 1880s. Radicals understood the importance of merchandising. William Cobbett used his publications to promote 'Cobbett's Corn' (imported maize) whilst 'Orator' Hunt extolled 'Hunt's Breakfast Powder'; in the 1840s it was possible to purchase anti-Corn Law crockery (Pickering 1991: 222–24). Radicalism developed what a later generation would call a 'counter culture', offering a way of living that included communal and associational dimensions and social solidarity that differed from the norms of laissez-faire capitalism, while still emphasising the Victorian themes of character, self-help, craft pride and personal responsibility that we associate with the labour aristocracy of artisans.

Radicalism possessed an aesthetic dimension; it was the unruly child of Romanticism. Oppositional politics seemed to unlock the creative imagination for many, and there was a concern to extend the cultural capital of working people through exposure to the benefits of high culture. For a time the Chartist *Northern Star* featured a 'Beauties of Byron' column, and it was not unusual for radical newspapers to feature the work of working-class poets. Even the cause of free trade could boast its own poet, Ebenezer Elliott, author of *Corn Law Rhymes* (1834). Shakespeare was a frequent reference point for radicals; the Leicester Chartist Thomas Cooper staged a Chartist production of *Hamlet* and even established a Shakespearean Chartist Association (Taylor 2002: 361). One of the great Victorian best-selling novels, G. W. M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* (1844–48), developed during its serialisation into a Chartist novel with its sensational exposure of the way the rich oppressed the poor (Reynolds was briefly a leading Chartist in 1848). The Chartist Ernest Jones was also known for his poems and romantic fiction, which included plenty of social criticism.

Radicals brandished their patriotic credentials but retained a strong internationalist dimension. Struggles by the common people against autocratic regimes

in Europe and elsewhere were widely followed and supported. Ireland's future within the United Kingdom was a consistent issue (for example, the Chartist demonstration on Kennington Common in 1848 included a delegation of Irish nationalists). Radicals often looked to the United States as a place where a democratic, egalitarian society was being built (though diminished by the existence of slavery). Garibaldi, the champion of Italian nationalism, became a popular hero for both radicals and liberals when he visited England in 1864; not only was he the epitome of radical chic but he helped inspire the movement to expand the franchise. Radicalism therefore had a cosmopolitan feel to it, with an eye on the search for liberty around the world as well as at home. This was intensified by the participation of continental radicals who often found themselves seeking political refuge in Britain; the most famous of these was of course Karl Marx.

The world of popular Toryism was very different. It disliked the (so-called) high mindedness of Victorian radicals and proclaimed its loyalty to British institutions and to the nation itself. Deference to the elite was a particular feature. We might expect such forlorn-tugging behaviour to be restricted to rural England but we find factory workers in Stalybridge in 1858 carrying banners proclaiming 'Long Life to Our Employers' (Joyce 1980: 85). Robert Roberts remembers that in his childhood in Edwardian Salford, his working-class neighbours would vote Conservative so as to feel at one with factory owners (Roberts 1971: 133–34). Whilst such experiences were not universal, they do express a very different mental world from radicalism. The values of paternalism and the belief that people were united as part of an organic society were part of Tory mental equipment.

The Conservative party of Disraeli began to make a distinctive populist appeal to working-class people after 1867 by emphasising a hedonistic cocktail of patriotism, pride in empire and the politics of fun, including the right to have a drink. Liberals were not only identified with temperance (especially after the Licensing Act of 1872) but were also associated with Puritanism more generally. In the Tory view, they were self-righteous bores. Tories appealed to ordinary people not with improving talks but with tea parties, which stressed conviviality. Archibald Salvidge in Liverpool, for example, developed Tory support from the 1890s onwards through parties and social events organised by the Working Men's Conservative Association as well as by emphasising the Anglican basis of the Conservative Party, which appealed to Protestants who disliked the large numbers of Irish Catholics in the city. This approach was also the stock in trade of the Primrose League, the key Conservative organisation that emerged after Disraeli's death. Its genius was that it was not actually attached to the Conservative Party. It proclaimed that it would support any party that would defend national principles but in practice this always meant the Tories. Between elections, it devoted itself to social events but at election time was able to provide an army of unpaid political volunteers. The League pioneered a more homely and domestic form of Toryism that became attractive to the kind of suburban, middle-class electors ('Villa Toryism') who became the mainstay of the Conservative Party after 1867. In the worldview of the Primrose League, the Conservatives were essentially a non-political political party where working-class people could hobnob with the local elite in a friendly atmosphere, strong on *bonhomie*. Tories knew that the greatest political sin was

being dull. In its way Toryism offered a way of life akin to radicalism, based on a combination of deference, jingoism, monarchy, pub life, pleasure, family, sport and opposition to Irish home rule. Toryism was thus well equipped to appeal to popular culture in a way that high-minded radicals were sometimes unable to do.

Whilst the worlds of radicalism and Toryism differed, it should be noted that there were overlaps. Both shared a veneration for the ‘people’ (even if this category was imagined in different ways). Radicals proclaimed that they were the true patriots as they spoke for the common people; Tories believed that the latter responded to their commonsensical approach.

There was also an enormous overlap between popular radicalism and liberalism. John Belchem rightly notes that ‘At critical points, radicals found it difficult to establish a distinct identity, to secure a political space which whigs and liberals . . . could not re-occupy’ (Belchem 1996: 7). Radicals and liberals shared a belief in the virtues of cheap government, respectability, temperance and the need to support liberal movements abroad. Thus Ernest Jones, jailed for his involvement with Chartism in 1848, ended up as a Liberal in the 1860s. Historians have thus claimed that the world of traditional radicalism did not come to an end in 1848 but mutated into populist liberalism in the age of Gladstone, which could be extremely radical (Biagini and Reid 1991). Joseph Chamberlain’s ‘unauthorised programme’ in 1885 argued for free elementary education, graduated taxation and the right of local government to take over land that could be sold as small holdings to assist the poor. Former Chartists would have felt at home with much of this. But mid-Victorian liberalism was very different from 1840s radicalism. It did not contain the same kind of class hostility (Belchem and Epstein 1997). Radicalism pointed to territory outside traditional liberalism and there were always tensions between the two. Liberals believed in the morality of the free market whereas radicals often saw the market as something from which the working class needed to be protected. Popular politics was transformed during the 1880s with the development of trade unionism and the spread of new socialist ideas, both through the (Marxist) Social Democratic Federation and the reformist Fabian Society. Radicalism produced ideas and forces that liberalism struggled to contain. The Lib–Lab tradition did not prevent the formation of the Labour Party, the spread of socialism or the creation of a distinctive working-class identity that would shape popular politics from the 1880s to the 1950s.

Should we interpret radicalism in socio-economic terms? The Marxist analysis, which gained ground in the 1960s, viewed movements such as Chartism as products of changes in capitalism and industrialisation, which generated the modern class system. Radicalism was the expression of the new working class, which became increasingly mature during the nineteenth century and proved able to develop its own institutions (trade unions) and eventually a new ideology (socialism) as it became increasingly class conscious. Recent historians have been more cautious, noting the complexity of radicalism and the ways it cannot be completely reduced to issues of class. If working-class politics was the expression of capitalist change, why did radicalism cohere around democratic rather than social or economic demands (Jones 1983)? Radicalism often blamed the aristocracy rather than the industrial bourgeoisie for the plight of the poor (which, from a Marxist perspective, was the wrong target). Political culture was shaped as much by assumptions about

religion, gender and national identity as it was by class. Above all, the Marxist interpretation could never adequately account for popular Toryism.

On the other hand, class suffused the language of radicalism. Class differentiation is the product of a social system in which the economic background into which a person is born determines his or her life opportunities thereafter. Victorian political culture was an attempt to make sense not only of inequality but of the deep problems of poverty, exploitation, urban squalor and conditions of work that often killed the poor. The achievement of radicals was that they deployed arguments about political power derived from the late eighteenth century in dynamic and new ways. Whilst Britain was never very close to revolution, the 1840s saw mass arming by workers and attempts at a general strike. Certainly there was a fear on the part of authorities at several moments in the early Victorian years that a revolution could break out. Radicals also sought to place the interests of labour on the political agenda. The platform at the Chartist demonstration at Kennington Common in 1848 included a banner that read 'Labour is the source of all value'. Radicals were always caught between approaches based on class antagonism and class conciliation, although the latter tended to be in the ascendant. Moreover, radicalism allowed for new anti-capitalist ideas to develop. The best example would be the ideas of Robert Owen, whose 'new moral world' offered a space in which cooperative ways of living were developed that were not shaped wholly around the values of political economy. The Chartist Land Plan was also an attempt to create new classless communities based on the values of equality and independence. The politics of the common people was a matrix with different elements co-existing and subject to reconfiguration.

One element of this matrix was gender. Popular politics, we now see, was shaped by a particular gender politics. The culture of independence that we have noted was also an argument for the importance of manliness. Male radicals (and some female radicals) subscribed to a view of the world in which men would work and earn enough for their wives and children to remain at home. The great aspiration of Victorian trade unions was the so-called breadwinner wage, which would allow workers the benefits of middle-class domesticity and hence independence. Women increasingly found themselves squeezed out of movements such as Chartism, which aspired to establish universal *manhood* suffrage.

There were different threads in popular politics, which is why historians are now cautious about the idea of a monolithic working-class consciousness (or middle-class consciousness). Deference and the adoration of hierarchy can be found amongst some workers; there were distinct hierarchies of workers in which the 'respectable' disassociated themselves from the 'unrespectable'. At the same time popular culture was suffused with defiant proclamations of egalitarianism and challenges to the social order. Workers felt the insults and injuries of an economic order that tolerated poverty in order to maximise profits every moment of their lives. The success of radicalism was that it placed the interests of labour on the political agenda. It did this in ways that were different from the welfare-based social democracy of the twentieth century, employing a language of independence and ancient rights. Hostility to the state and a belief in self-help made people radicals in the nineteenth century. It was only later that it made people conservatives.

THE THEATRE OF POLITICS

Why did the English constitution enjoy the respect that it did? Walter Bagehot observed of the constitution: ‘The elements which excite the most easy reverence (are) the *theatrical* elements; those which appeal to the senses, which claim to be embodiments of the greatest human ideas’ (Bagehot 2001 [1867]: 9). This is part of his famous distinction between the dignified and the efficient part of the constitution; in other words, the parts of the constitution that actually do things (that govern and pass laws) are able to do so because of the respect ensured by the figure of the monarch, even though the latter did not do very much. Bagehot was correct that respect for the monarchy was woven deeply into British society. Even the Chartists would often begin meetings with a toast to the Queen and, despite some republican elements in the movement, there is no reason to believe they were insincere (Pickering 2003: 227–48). Bagehot’s analysis would be vindicated by the popular support for the Queen’s Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 but there was a theatrical dimension to politics more generally. We can see this in the way politics was performed at a popular level either in the form of election rituals or in the protocols of mass meetings.

As Jon Lawrence argues, nineteenth-century ‘electoral politics were as much about entertainment as they were about policy’ (Lawrence 2009: 4–5). Elections had a festive and ritualistic quality, which dated back to the late seventeenth century. They were opportunities for an elaborate party, which celebrated the values of the community even though, for much of the nineteenth century, most of the community could not vote. Elections remained a deeply public event even after the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872. Before this, votes would often be publicly declared and the results (who voted for whom) would be recorded in poll books. Electors had to be careful who they were seen to vote for. During the 1852 election, a Cheapside grocer, for example, recorded the political preferences of his female customers and announced he would vote for whoever was the most popular, an example of the way women could indirectly affect the choice of candidate even without the vote (Gleadle 2009: 30).

Election customs varied according to the practice of each constituency, which meant that they were soaked in the language of tradition. Frank O’Gorman writes of the ‘elaborate courtesies of the canvass’ (O’Gorman 1992: 79–115). These included the ceremonial nomination of the candidates and the daily processions on their behalf, complete with brass bands, banners, cockades, handbills, posters, the ringing of church bells and even the firing of guns. Daily speeches were the norm, usually full of civic pride, invocations of patriotism and praise of the English constitution. The candidate needed to demonstrate that he could deal with heckling, which was a normal aspect of popular politics and a test of the candidate’s manliness and wit. Speeches would be reported in local newspapers, which would also magnify the importance of the proceedings. There were also treating rituals in which breakfasts, dinners and picnics were laid on for potential voters and many non-electors as well. There was the ceremony of the official declaration and the practice of carting the winner on a decorated chair through the streets to celebrate his victory (‘chairing the candidate’). There would often be a victory speech to the crowd either from a town hall or from a hotel window. Elections could be extremely disorderly and unruly. Violence was a regular occurrence. In the 1865 election at

Chippenham, for example, defeated Liberal supporters reacted by attacking the homes of local Conservatives (Lawrence 2009: 44). Many election traditions (such as ‘chairing the candidate’) declined in the later nineteenth century, but elections remained boisterous, public events well into the twentieth century.

The theatre of politics had its own costumes. There was a specific vestimentary culture in which the wearing of specific clothing or items of apparel, such as the (French revolutionary) cap of liberty, was a visual symbol that could be understood even by the illiterate (Navickas 2010). It was not uncommon for candidates to define themselves not through the use of Westminster party labels but through the use of colours, whose meaning was ambiguous and therefore capable of appealing to a wider audience (Vernon 1993: 164–67). Women during elections would often wave handkerchiefs with the colour of a particular candidate (Gleadle 2009: 79). Charles Dickens’ portrait of the Blues and the Buffs in the Eatanswill election in *The Pickwick Papers* therefore rings true.

This vibrant political culture was not just confined to parliamentary elections. We can find it in local elections and the mass meetings that were part of Chartism and other popular movements. Chartist meetings often offered a rich spectacle with lots of music, including well-known hymns to enhance the sense of occasion and to bind the people together (Bowen and Pickering 2009: 44–63). Political lectures could, however, be more sedate affairs. Chartist and Anti-Corn Law League lecturers travelled the country to expand the political education of the people and to shape their views (Martin 2010).

Another part of the Victorian theatre of politics was that the main political parties at Westminster began to actively organise their supporters throughout the nation. There had always been some rudimentary level of organisation. The Carlton Club was established in 1832 as a base for the Conservative Party, and Francis Bonham was active in organising Conservative supporters throughout the country in the 1830s. The Reform Club was created in 1836 and was associated with Whigs and Parliamentary Radicals. The 1867 Reform Act, however, made it vital to develop new ways of organising the much larger electorate. This happened rather haphazardly. The National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations was created in 1867, but the National Liberal Federation did not emerge till 1877. The struggle between Gladstone and Disraeli in the 1860s and 1870s seemed to personalise this new form of political culture, based on a two-party system with party political machines organising voters. In 1883 the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act limited the amount of money that could be spent on a contest but also boosted the need for unpaid volunteers to assist in canvassing and getting out the vote, which further increased party partisanship. Popular politics became steadily more tribal.

The material culture of politics expanded with souvenirs such as Staffordshire figurines of major political figures such as Gladstone and Disraeli, with their gaudy colours and consensual images of the link between statesman and nation. This allowed the culture of mainstream politics to invade the mantelpiece of respectable working-class homes. The cult of some politicians could reach absurd lengths. Gladstone was famous for cutting down trees as a form of relaxation; it became part of his public image. Admirers would even carry away wood chips from trees that the politician had recently felled as souvenirs. One recorded:

I carried it (a wood chip) home as a treasure. I have decorated it and put it under a glass shade, and put a card in front of it to commemorate the work of that day . . . I shall keep it as an heir loom during my life time, and I hope my children will do the same.

(quoted in Windscheffel 2007: 112)

The theatrical dimension to politics made the world of Westminster accessible to all.

The Victorian period did witness extraordinary moments of social conflict. There was a fundamental disconnection between Parliament and people in many respects; there were moments of violence and rebellion. However, the Victorian period was also characterised by the development of relatively stable two-party politics and the first-past-the-post electoral system. The project of making the state feel fair and transparent generated levels of social trust, which allowed workers to be incorporated within the polity without resort to barricades (Mandler 2006: 21). The invocations of constitutionalism by Victorian radicals would be intermittently echoed by radicals in the twentieth century, and the commitment to a parliamentary and constitutional approach would shape the Labour Party after 1900. This culture is at once familiar to us and yet its invocations of the constitution, manliness, independence and the cultivation of character remind us of how different the Victorians were from the world that came after them.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

RACE AND CITIZENSHIP

Colonial inclusions and exclusions



Alan Lester

INTRODUCTION: RIGHTS AND RACE

As Victoria ascended the throne in June 1837, the House of Commons ordered the printing of a report on the treatment of indigenous peoples in Britain's proliferating colonial territories. The report heralded a period of intense discussion of the political rights both of emigrant Britons and of those whose lands they had invaded. I intend to show how concepts of these rights were interwoven in the settler colonies, how discussion of them connected colonial, British and American sites, and how political rights in Victorian Britain were discussed within this imperial frame of reference.

The 1837 report represented the conclusions of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aborigines, chaired by Thomas Fowell Buxton. Buxton had been prompted to call for an enquiry by events on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, where Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban had annexed further Xhosa territory, apparently on behalf of British settlers, during a war that Buxton's missionary correspondents in the Cape had described as unjust. The Committee on Aborigines had been comprised mainly of humanitarian evangelicals and its brief encompassed Australasia, the Pacific and British North America, as well as southern Africa (BBP 1836–37). The committee's report warned that the atonement Britons had achieved through the abolition of slavery was being jeopardized by abuses such as the usurpation of indigenous people's land and the 'debasement of their character'. The loss of indigenous peoples' independence should be compensated, as Buxton put it, by 'all the benefits of knowledge, civilization, education and Christianity that it is in our power to bestow' (BPP, 1836–37: 57). In 1840 the newly formed Aborigines Protection Society (APS) codified some of the advice contained in the Committee's Report. It argued that land should be transferred to settler ownership only by treaty and even then with adequate reserves for indigenous peoples (APS 1840). Indigenous individuals should have the same rights as any other British subject, including that of holding and inheriting property and that of testifying in court, even if their customs prevented them taking an oath.

The Victorian period began, then, with the elaboration of a new agenda for British imperialism: one founded on a divinely sanctioned civilising mission, opposed to the naked greed and brutality of emigrant Britons, and promoting a

conception of equal rights regardless of 'race'. However, at the same time that Buxton and other humanitarians in Britain were outlining a vision in which indigenous peoples would share British settlers' rights, many settlers themselves were trying to renegotiate those rights. As D'Urban was struggling to counter humanitarian criticisms in the Cape, his counterpart in Upper Canada, Lieutenant Governor George Arthur, was dealing with a rebellion of British settlers and American allies. In neighbouring Lower Canada, French-speaking settlers were also in rebellion, the central issue being the ability of a governor and nominated executive to override an elected legislative assembly, in which the vast majority of settlers had no representation – a situation replicated to a greater or lesser extent throughout the autocratically governed empire. In response, Arthur wrote that it behoved the British government to raise in the Canadas 'a race of Englishmen with the same Government, the same feelings, and the same love of freedom that fills our bosoms; and here we may by their assistance oppose the most effectual barrier to the demon of democracy, which is threatening all civilized Governments' (Shaw 1980: 229). In opposing British freedom to American democracy in this way, Arthur put his finger on the conservative vision of rights and responsibilities characterising the British imperial variant of 'citizenship'.

Within the British Empire, of course, there was no such thing as citizenship, just as there was not within Britain itself. Britons remained subjects of the Crown according to a set of constitutional traditions, rather than citizens with a direct relationship to a state. In order to obtain support for the abolition of the slave trade, antislavery activists had distanced themselves from French Revolutionary notions of the Rights of Man and even the more delimited Rights of the Citizen. Just as Buxton's humanitarian vision of empire posited a community of *subjects* loyal to the British Crown and Church and with equal rights and responsibilities regardless of their colour, rather than any constitutional notion of the imperial *citizen*, so Arthur, fearing the chaotic influence of American Revolutionary ideals across the border, upheld a model of governance in Upper Canada based on the humane exercise of power by elites entrusted to effect it. Buxton's most significant ally in government during the late 1830s, the humanitarian Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg, shared Arthur's view, having voted against the 1832 Reform Act.

Broadly, then, in 1837, two kinds of struggle were being enacted over political subjecthood in different locations of the British Empire. On the one hand, prompted by settler brutality and dispossession, humanitarians were arguing powerfully for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in whatever forms of subjecthood applied to settlers, including the retention of land. On the other hand, settler communities were seeking to enlarge that sphere of subjecthood so as to attain the right of representative government. These two struggles were connected in debates that cut across and, sometimes, beyond the British Empire. What proved crucial to their outcome was a consolidated, trans-imperial notion of racial difference.

ESTABLISHING NEW COLONIAL SOCIETIES, c.1837–c.1845

The 'great experiment' of emancipating enslaved peoples in the Caribbean would prove foundational to debates over race and rights in succeeding decades.

Pro-slavery campaigners had insisted that the differences between African slaves and white Britons were fundamental, innate, and preventative of any envisaged improvement on the part of the former. But antislavery proponents, with Buxton at their head, had promised their fellow Britons that, in line with the new principles of political economy, freed black men and women would work harder on the West Indian plantations than they had as enslaved labourers, that they would practise a sober Christianity, and that they would receive gratefully the blessing of instruction in the art of civilised, British, conduct in the home. If anything would demonstrate the humanitarian principle that all human beings, created in God's image, had the capacity to progress to the heights of civilization achieved by certain British subjects, then it would be the fruits of emancipation.

When, in the early 1840s, most former slaves in Jamaica chose to leave the plantations, to work for themselves and their reconstituted families rather than for their former owners, and to shape their own syncretic forms of Christianity, plantations were left short of labour, sugar production plummeted and many missionaries were left disappointed. By 1857, *The Times* was proclaiming the failure of the emancipation experiment: 'it destroyed an immense property, ruined thousands of good families, [and] degraded the Negroes still lower than they were' (quoted in Drescher 2002: 202–3). During the intervening period, this perceived failure had profound consequences elsewhere in the empire.

In the late 1830s antislavery activities had given humanitarians the language of divinely created human universalism with which to express a defence of indigenous peoples elsewhere in the empire. But the arguments of the pro-planter lobby, centred on inherent racial difference, and increasingly associated with polygenetic explanations of human origins, could also be appropriated and extended geographically. They were adopted by spokesmen for British settler communities facing humanitarian critique. Just as the antislavery campaign had been fostered by networks of communication linking, for instance, Baptist missionaries in the West Indies to members of the London Corresponding Society and, via the influential missionary press, to concerned working and middle class readers across the British provinces, so British settler communities on the frontiers of empire had their own circuits of discussion and debate, linking them to each other and to the British metropolitan reading public.

In the years around Victoria's accession to the throne, a number of settler presses were established on those same colonial frontiers that had been investigated by the Committee on Aborigines. Just as it did in Britain, this flourishing colonial press enabled the assertion and dissemination of new political demands. For many colonial editors, their purpose was specifically to defend settler communities against 'naïve' and 'sentimental' humanitarian interference by appealing to metropolitan British, as well as other colonial British readers. Editors like Robert Godlonton in the Cape and Alfred Domett in New Zealand frequently redeployed the rhetoric of inherent racial difference, and with increasing confidence as explanations were sought for 'the failure of emancipation' during the 1840s and 1850s. The earlier propaganda war over slavery was continued and played out between humanitarians and settlers across a wider terrain. While these conflicts were the result of the particular relationships defining each colonial frontier, they came to be thought of by metropolitan and colonial Britons as episodes in a more general story of



Figure 21.1 Kinnaister and his fellow convicts murder aborigines in New South Wales.
Mary Evans Picture Library

civilization versus savagery, Briton versus ‘Aborigine’, and entitlement versus exclusion.

As the first overseas Britons to be targeted by the humanitarian campaign, the eastern Cape settlers were also the first to fight back. The vocal Thomas Bowker complained that ‘[t]he very laudable exertions to suppress the slave trade, have induced a feeling of pity and commiseration for the swarthy nations of Africa, in which the Kafirs [Xhosa], unfortunately for themselves and us, have largely participated’ (Bowker 1864: 141). Godlonton, a former London printer, sent copies of

his newspaper, the *Graham's Town Journal*, as well as his book (1836), to Britain in the hope that their alternative story of unprovoked Xhosa aggression, indicative of an inherently savage African nature, would challenge the humanitarians' version of the events leading to the 1834–36 war, and the subsequent findings of the Select Committee on Aborigines.

At the same time, settlers in New South Wales were outraged by humanitarian interventions in their relationships with Aboriginal people. While the Committee on Aborigines precipitated the restoration of land to the Xhosa in the Cape, in Australia it resulted in the implementation of recommendations made by George Arthur. Before dealing with rebels in Upper Canada, Arthur had governed Van Diemen's Land during its bloody 'Black War'. Having overseen the all but total destruction of the Aboriginal tribes of this colony, Arthur advised the establishment of a Protectorate of Aborigines, designed to prevent the similar annihilation of Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. The squatters who were engaged in the rush to grab land in the district were infuriated at this potential humanitarian impediment to colonial expansion. The *Geelong Advertiser* warned both the colonial and British governments:

Let the matter [of the Protectorate] be taken up vigorously by the local press, backed by the settlers, and the subject will ultimately be forced upon the notice of our rulers, and the influential part of the British public, through a thousand channels.

(quoted in Arkley 2000: 205)

The Superintendent of the District, Charles La Trobe duly noted that the Protectorate had fostered 'a spirit in the European residents which it is the most anxious desire of the government to remove' (quoted in Arkley 2000: 289).

A few years later in New Zealand, the Protectorate established under the Treaty of Waitangi was also the subject of fierce settler critique. When the Maori chief Te Raupuraha's resistance to the colonial usurpation of land in the Wairau Valley was blamed on humanitarian interference, the *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle* succeeded in having its view promulgated in Britain through an editorial in *The Times*: 'under the guidance of a weak . . . and shallow system of deception – 'yclept, Aboriginal Protection – the philanthropists have blindly and most vilely reversed the proper relative positions of civilization and barbarism . . . engendering in the breast of the savage a . . . recurrence to the bloodthirsty propensities of their original condition' (*Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Herald*, 16 December 1843).

By the early 1840s a debate over the capacity of indigenous peoples to become 'civilized', and over the legitimacy of settlers dispossessing them and dealing with the consequences in their own ways, was being waged across extensive trans-imperial networks. This was a debate in which the participants were almost exclusively metropolitan and colonial Britons. Through their acts of resistance to, or engagement with, the extension of British settlement, indigenous peoples certainly made their presence felt indirectly within these networks of discussion. Sometimes, as we will see in the case of Khoesan rebels below, they were privy to Britons' deliberations and could react to them. But it would be some time yet before certain

communities of indigenous peoples could contribute themselves to debates about their own nature and their own rights, through mission education, literacy and the capital required to establish alternative presses.

The outcome of this debate over race and rights mattered greatly to British settlers. They were utterly dependent on continued ties with Britain for protection and they could thrive materially only through their links with metropolitan manufacturers and merchants and, increasingly, with other flourishing colonial communities. Not only did humanitarian critique raise the spectre of land restoration to indigenous peoples, loss of control over indigenous labour and passive governmental responses to indigenous resistance; it also jeopardised claims that settlers could be responsible for the governance of their own territories.

The Committee on Aborigines had recommended that control of 'native affairs' continue to be lodged in the hands of a protective metropolitan government and its representatives in the colonies, rather than abandoning indigenous peoples to the control of the very settlers who were dispossessing and killing them. During the ensuing decade the APS continued to lobby against moves towards settler self-government. While Colonial Office ministers like Glenelg sympathised with humanitarian critiques, and while communities of British colonists were widely seen by metropolitan Britons as capable of aberrant, planter-like cruelty to indigenous peoples, it seemed to many as if settlers were never going to be entrusted with the responsibility to govern themselves and their new territories.

WINNING SELF-GOVERNMENT, c.1840–c.1860

The impediment to settlers' 'rights' occasioned by concern for indigenous peoples was to prove less serious and enduring than many settlers had feared and humanitarians hoped. We need to revisit the Canadas to locate the beginnings of the settler victory in the struggle over race and rights. Once the rebellions of the late 1830s had been repressed, the Colonial Office despatched a governor-general and high commissioner to solve the problem of governing the region as a whole. Lord Durham, who had backed parliamentary reform in Britain as part of his father-in-law Lord Grey's government, brought with him two radical thinkers on imperial governance, Charles Buller and Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Their report was presented to parliament just two years after the Select Committee on Aborigines Report, but had the effect of completely undermining it. In its primary intention of securing colonists' loyalty and preventing a repeat of the American Revolution in the Canadas, the Durham report failed to mention indigenous Canadians' status at all. When Durham criticised the 'early colonial administration' for excluding 'the native Canadian from power' and vesting 'all offices of trust and emolument in the hands of strangers of English origin', he was referring to French and English-speaking colonists born in the Canadas rather than the people of the First Nations (Report on the Affairs of British North America 1839: 14).

For the settler population, the Durham report outlined a staged progression, beginning with representative government, in which an elected legislature would be overseen by a governor. Responsible government, in which the elected legislature would control virtually all affairs except foreign, military and constitutional, would ultimately follow. While, in line with the Committee on Aborigines'

recommendation, the responsibility for the protection of indigenous people's rights inhered nominally in the Colonial Office in London, as one official there put it, '[p]ractically and in truth every thing must be left to the local Authorities' (quoted in Evans *et al.* 2003: 52). The Canadian provinces' Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, later extended to the other North American colonies, held that most indigenous peoples were effectively wards of the state, but outlined in more detail the process through which individuals might qualify for enfranchisement. They had 'not only to demonstrate that they had become educated/civilised, but were compelled to renounce their rights to share in communal payments, to individuate their land and to disassociate themselves from their communities' (Evans *et al.* 2003: 51). In 1869, Oronhyatekha, who was qualified for enfranchisement by virtue of his father's status as a Wesleyan Reverend, complained: 'I hardly conceive it to be possible to frame an Act which would remove or more effectually bar any Indian from seeking enfranchisement than it does' (quoted in Evans *et al.* 2003: 52).¹

Given the networks of communication and debate enabled by the settler press, the Canadian experiment in colonial self-government could not long be contained. As early as September 1839, *The Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser* carried extracts from Durham's Report, and the *Colonial Times* of Hobart proclaimed: 'Of all the State Documents we have ever perused, the "Report" ... is, without exception, the most masterly' (*Colonial Times*, Hobart, 9 July 1839). Durham's intention 'To promote the settlement of wild lands and the general improvement of the colonies' was music to the ears of settlers. *The Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser* even credited Durham's 'masterly ... exposure of Colonial misrule' with ensuring Glenelg's departure from government (*The Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 27 January 1840).

In both the Cape and Van Diemen's Land/Tasmania, existing settler agitation against the upholding of indigenous peoples' 'rights' was accompanied by a more immediate catalyst for mobilisation around self-government from the late 1840s: resistance to convict transportation. In 1849, Dutch-Afrikaans and English-speaking commercial interests forged an alliance in Cape Town to protest at the intended use of their settlement as a destination for convict reoffenders. Governor Harry Smith found that he could not successfully govern the colony in the face of a Cape Town-based boycott of supplies to the military and the government. While the convict transport ships were eventually sent to Van Diemen's Land, the crisis gave many Cape Colonists the confidence and the determination to follow the Canadian example and secure greater powers for themselves from the metropolitan government.

Although, unlike in the Canadas, a settler rebellion was out of the question in the Cape Colony, the attainment of self-government was linked to a rebellion nonetheless. In 1850, Khoesan subjects, located in the eastern Cape Kat River valley as a result of a humanitarian-inclined experiment, joined with the Xhosa in a further war against British settler expansion. Many of the Kat River rebels were alienated from the central and local authorities by reading the colonial press. Coverage of the settler struggle for representative government had a particular impact within the settlement, since it revealed that settlers intended using new-found powers to re-enact vagrancy laws against freed 'Coloureds' including the

settlement's Khoesan. Khoesan soldiers in the Cape Mounted Rifles decided to desert the British forces and join the Xhosa when they read of such things in the *Graham's Town Journal*, and particularly when they encountered a call for the 'ultimate extinction of the worthless creatures [the Khoesan]' in the Dutch-Afrikaans paper, *De Zuid Afrikaan* (Ross 1999: 156). One of the main complaints of rebels was that they were to be removed from the protection of the Queen and placed under direct settler jurisdiction.

However, like the indigenous peoples of the Canadas, the Kat River rebels were appealing to a metropolitan government and populace that were less disposed to listen than they had been just a decade before. In Britain, *The Times* carried a series of editorials on the 1850–52 Cape frontier war. While still critical of British settlers, pointing to the war profiteering in which frontier communities had engaged, the paper discarded any lingering concern for indigenous subjects. *The Times* agreed with the representations of the Society for the Reform of Colonial Government that had been created in 1849 by Edward Gibbon Wakefield and William Molesworth. What was of paramount importance now was to grant settlers representative government so that the British exchequer would no longer have to pay the costs of seemingly continual warfare against the untamed and, in the wake of disillusionment at the results of emancipation, quite possibly untameable 'savages' of the Cape and other frontiers.

Much of the literature on the granting of self-government examines metropolitan government concerns to farm out the costs of colonial government (not least to keep taxation relatively low in Britain and thus avoid a Continental-style 1848 revolution), and encourage self-reliant free trading colonies. These were certainly significant developments. But such metropolitan-centred explanations elide the effect of the agitation that settlers themselves were engaged in, and indeed that of indigenous resistance to complete political exclusion. *The Times'* attacks on the Colonial Office for mismanaging the Cape's convict crisis and frontier war helped to bring about the fall of Russell's government in February 1852, and they also helped to establish the case for settler control of their own 'native affairs'. The Kat River rebels taking up arms against settler self-government thus had the counter-productive effect of encouraging Britain to grant representative government more swiftly. But fear of further rebellion also helped induce a more liberal constitution under that settler government – one which was property based and would thereby include some 'Coloured' and African people as voters. As the Cape's Attorney General put it: 'I would rather meet the Hottentot [Khoesan] at the hustings voting for his representative than meet the Hottentot in the wilds with his gun upon his shoulder' (Trapido 1980: 262).²

Within two years of the Cape precedent the newer British colony of Natal also received representative government, but due to the predominance of British settlers rather than poorer Dutch-Afrikaners there, a much higher franchise qualification was adopted. This excluded all but a handful of black people, who, like native Canadians, had to apply individually, by virtue of their property, housing, education, monogamy and Christianity, for exemption from the 'native law'. Natal's Lieutenant Governor was quite explicit about the purely legitimating function of the new arrangements, explaining that:

If this scheme of exemption was likely to throw a large number of Native voters on the colony, so as really to influence any election, I should be amongst the first to oppose it, but this ... cannot be so for generations to come ... [therefore] I see no necessity for any illiberal ... barrier ... to a Native becoming a voter.

(quoted in Welsh 1971: 62)

The vast majority of Coloureds and Africans in both the Cape and Natal, like those in the Afrikaner republics, would remain disqualified from the franchise. In the British colonies though, they would be excluded by their lack of property rather than their race per se.

In Van Diemen's Land, where agitation to remove the 'convict stain' had similarly focused on self-government, there was no question of Aboriginal representation. After 1847, the remaining 47 of the Aboriginal people who had been removed to Flinders Island lived at Oyster Cove effectively as wards of state under the oversight of a catechist. The settler population of the island was free to agitate for self-government around the issue of convictism without the need to worry about indigenous resistance. They did so with great effect from 1844, and with protest meetings, petitions, personal visits and letters published in *The Times*, succeeded in obtaining a suspension of transportation to the colony. In 1847, the British government, under pressure of economic contraction, Chartist activism and, not least, the very refusal of other colonies like the Cape to accept convicts, decided to resume transportation, sparking a boycott of convict employment and renewed popular agitation. The colonial resistance movement was encouraged by former Chartist and Union organisers transported from Britain, with a petitioning campaign modelled on the Anti-Corn Law League.

The British government's decision ultimately to end convict transportation to the eastern Australian colonies altogether was taken in association with its decision to grant settler self-government, not least as a result of increasingly unified settler anger, including that which the press orchestrated between the Cape and Van Diemen's Land. Between 1855 and 1857, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria all gained representative government.³ Despite limited franchise upper houses, manhood suffrage independent of property followed relatively swiftly in these colonies, where the diminished presence of Aboriginal people left no cause for concern about being swamped at the polls. In fact the technical inclusion of Aboriginal men in a universal male suffrage was simply an oversight, since no one seriously anticipated their participation. Victoria provided the mechanism of a secret ballot that became known as the 'Australian ballot' and was later adopted in the US and in Britain in 1872.

In contrast to the effective crushing of Aboriginal capacity to resist colonisation in Australia, British settlers in New Zealand were all too aware, especially after the 1843 Wairau 'Affray' and the 1845 war over control of the Bay of Islands, that certain Maori chiefs retained the ability to resist, violently and successfully, intrusions on their sovereignty. Settler communities on the two islands were too small, fragmented and vulnerable to exercise self-government in the ways that those at the Cape and in Australia could. Nevertheless, settlers here campaigned for self-government and in 1846 the Colonial Secretary Earl Grey drew up a Charter giving

males with property and literacy in English the vote for a legislature. In London the APS argued vociferously against the Charter because of its effective exclusion of Maori voters, but the main impediment came from Earl Grey's namesake in New Zealand itself. Governor George Grey, who would go on to defeat Xhosa resistance in the Cape and secure the eastern frontier for self-governing settlers, suspended the Charter explaining that '[t]he aboriginal inhabitants are so numerous, and generally, I regret to say, are so much better armed than our own men, that no forces which Great Britain could spare, could hold military possession of the country until after a long and expensive war' (quoted in Evans *et al.*, 2003: 74). Given this, a constitution that encouraged settlers to provoke the Maori was unacceptable.

Drawing inspiration from previous campaigns elsewhere, though, settlers continued to agitate, and in 1852 a bi-cameral parliament was allowed, with the governor nominating an upper house and settlers on a property qualification electing a lower house. Large areas under Maori control were not included in the electoral districts and almost all Maori continued to be excluded by dint of communal rather than individual property. Without a governor determined to hold out against such provisions on the spot, the APS's opposition in London proved ineffective. Despite exhortations from Grey's successor, among the first acts of the new assembly was the financial and political reining in of the Native Department, and agitation for full responsible government. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who had accompanied Durham to the Canadas some 15 years before, and who had lost one of his brothers in the Wairau 'Affray', complained that 'nothing could be more irritating than the reiteration of the calumny against the colonists, which had for so many years been made an excuse for depriving them of their rights' (quoted in Evans *et al.* 2003: 76). In 1856 Gore Browne was appointed governor with the task of instituting Responsible Government, although Maori affairs were technically reserved for his decision.

As had happened a few years before in the Cape, the resistance of indigenous peoples only had the effect of persuading the metropolitan government that it could no longer afford, and no longer wanted, to protect the interests of those peoples. Faced with the rise of the Maori King movement and the declaration of war in Taranaki in 1860, the Colonial Secretary placed Maori affairs under the control of the settler government and the newly returned Governor Grey, fresh from his 'triumph' over the Xhosa. As in the Cape, though, violent resistance also had the effect of forcing concessions. In 1867, noting that Maori paid taxes, owned three quarters of the North Island and were 'a people with whom the Government had recently been at war, and with whom it was desirous that peace should be established', the former Commissioner of Lands Donald McLean secured a parallel system of Maori representation in the legislature. With a universal male franchise, Maori men could vote for four representatives to sit alongside settler representatives and those who qualified for the 'white' electorate would retain that right. Despite extensive Maori reservations about the system, as Evans *et al.* note: 'White members, who had assumed that the Maori would simply observe proceedings, were taken by surprise when they rose to speak – in Maori, which triggered a rush to find interpreters. A further unpleasant discovery was made: in a House of relatively small numbers and shifting factions, four Maori voting as a *bloc* could influence the fate of Bills, and even bring down a government' (2003: 82).

In both the Cape and New Zealand, by the 1860s, indigenous resistance to loss of land and sovereignty had had the counterproductive effect of hastening the abandonment of indigenous protection by an ostensibly humanitarian-inclined British government. In both cases, too, however, settler communities had been forced, for the sake of their own preservation, to concede a sometimes important degree of representation to indigenous and ‘mixed race’ interests. The rhetoric of assimilation implied that this ‘special’ protection of indigenous representation would become redundant once indigenous and ‘mixed race’ electors could operate on the same terms as their settler counterparts. In post-responsible government Canada and Australia, more dispersed, fragmented, outnumbered and disenfranchised indigenous populations were more readily subjected to confining apparatuses of the settler state – the residential school in Canada, the protectorate and mission station in Australia – and to the attempts at ‘forced assimilation’ that went with them. Even though successive New Zealand governments pursued policies of amalgamation designed to eradicate a separate Maori identity, and even though the remaining independent African chiefdoms of southern Africa were conquered in pursuit of confederation in the late nineteenth century, neither New Zealand nor South Africa fostered the same kind of institutionalised abuses that Canadian residential schools and Australian protectorates inflicted on ‘inmates’ once settler governments were made responsible for the ‘protection’ and ‘civilization’ of ‘their own natives’.

WIDENING THE FRANCHISE ‘AT HOME’

Many of the inter-colonial conversations over race and rights that resulted in widespread settler self-government by the 1860s were channelled through Britain. The settler politicians, humanitarian activists and nominated officials who debated the terms of settler representation in the colonies conveyed their ideas in debates in the House of Commons, editorials and letters in the national and provincial press, private missives to family and friends, and books printed either in the colonies themselves or in London and distributed through the country. Rather than acting simply as a hub for the collation and dissemination of colonial ideas about race and rights, British society was inflected with them.

As Catherine Hall (2000) has shown, discussion of the franchise leading to the 1867 Reform Acts took place within the context of colonial considerations, as the differences of race, class, gender and religion, debated as much in the West Indies and Ireland as at home, coalesced around a definition of those entitled to share in citizenship. The new franchise arrangements of the settler colonies provided those in favour of more radical domestic reform with inspiration, and those against with an example to be avoided. In 1863, at a constituency meeting in Rochdale, Richard Cobden and John Bright pointed out:

They are much freer in Australia, in New Zealand and in Canada than we are in England . . . It is odd, it is most strange, that this country, which is the parent, and boasts itself the parent, of representative institutions for almost the whole world should thus . . . shut out its own children from the franchise, the right to which every Englishman becomes immediately heir if he passes to any of our Colonies.

(*Manchester Guardian*, 25 November 1863)

Two years later, Bright took on those opponents of radical reform who insisted that self-governance had merely opened up colonial parliaments to venality and ignorance. He countered:

whether you go to South Africa, to Australia, to the British North American Provinces . . . you will find that life and property are as secure, that education is much more extended among the people . . . that the laws are as merciful and just . . . that the millions of our countrymen established in these countries are as well in all circumstances of life, as are the people of this country whom they have left behind them.

(*The Times*, 19 January 1865)

The definition of ‘character’ was key to delimiting those to be enfranchised in 1867. Included were self-reliant, self-restraining and hard-working men, their character evidenced in their voluntary associations, their periodicals and their dignified political campaigns. While such ‘character’ was most obviously classed and gendered ‘at home’, it was of course most obviously raced in Britain’s colonies. The attributes of mature political expression and organisation were the property of white settler communities – communities that could converse on such matters with, and indeed inspire their metropolitan contemporaries. Most decisively, these were not seen as attributes of the indigenous peoples of these colonies. Indeed the very conquering and ‘taming’ of their lands had helped qualify settler men as self-reliant and enterprising as far as metropolitan Britons were concerned. When restrained and ‘respectable’ forms of political mobilisation did emerge among mission-educated indigenous men towards the end of the Victorian period, as we will see, it was their race that continued to define and restrict their ‘character’. For now, however, and even after the 1884 Reform Act, settler and metropolitan women, the lower class ‘residuum’ in Britain, and indigenous peoples in the colonies shared their disenfranchisement.

MAINTAINING WHITE MEN’S COUNTRIES IN AND BEYOND THE EMPIRE, c.1860–c.1901

The debates over racial difference and the rights of indigenous and settler populations, which resulted in universal self-governance for the latter by the end of the 1890s, and which inflected metropolitan franchise reform, were never entirely confined to imperial circuits of discussion. As we have seen, the initial granting of self-government to settlers in the Canadas was spurred by fears of a contagion of republican sentiment from the south. The US would continue to be an interlocutor in British imperial debates over citizenship. With the assistance of propagandists from the Southern states, the events of the US Civil War helped British observers to refine the hardening racial discourse that British settlers had been propagating since the 1830s. For many Britons, the ‘proper’ place of the ‘Negro’ in the US South was associated with that of the freed slave and the African in the British colonies. In each of these sites, according to *The Times*, an inherent incapacity of blacks to work, unless forced, had been demonstrated by premature acts of emancipation (quoted in Bolt 1971: 58). As Philip Curtin notes: ‘In the

trans-Atlantic exchange of ideas, Britain gave the anti-slavery crusade to America in the 1830s and received back the American racism of the 1850s' (Curtin 1964: 372).

American influence of a different kind helped prompt the further extension of political rights in British colonies during the 1890s, but not to indigenous peoples. In 1892, New Zealand's *Southland Times* warned its readers that the publication of the autobiography of the American businesswoman, free love advocate and suffragist Victoria Woodhull, 'a lady whose name and doctrines once filled America from Maine to California', was likely to 'agitate opinion' in the colony (*Southland Times*, 5 January 1892). Woodhull had stood for president in the US in 1872, in order to highlight the continuing exclusion of women from the vote, when even the 'negro' had been granted that constitutional right. By the early 1890s, a far more conservative influence on settler suffragists had also come in part from the US. The World's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was an alliance between American and British evangelical women campaigning across the world of Anglophone colonial settlement. As the American president of the movement, Frances Willard, explained in an interview reproduced in New Zealand's *Evening Post*: 'Progress has been our motto: First temperance, then prohibition, then women's suffrage' (*Evening Post*, 7 January 1893). When taken up by middle-class white suffragists in the Australasian colonies, the movement gave the final spur necessary to the extension of political rights to women, first in New Zealand in 1893 (and despite objections from one of the parliamentary Maori representatives), and then in the Australian colonies.

Australasian precedents were watched closely by those on both sides of the suffragette debate in Britain, with the agent general for South Australia, J. A. Cockburn, telling British suffragettes that 'he did not think that the women of Great Britain would have long to wait' now that the Australian colonies had led the way (*Manchester Guardian*, 17 November 1898). What these colonial campaigners for British women's rights failed to mention was that although Maori women in New Zealand gained the vote on the same terms as Maori men, in general, the enfranchisement of white women was seen as bolstering the forces of white civilisation against continuing indigenous threats and, in the Australian colonies especially, against Chinese immigrants. As Alfred Deakin, a prime mover in the Australian federation cause, put it: 'No power dissolved [gendered] divisions among colonists so forcefully . . . as "the desire that we should be one people, and remain one people, without the admixture of other races"' (quoted in Grimshaw 2000: 560).

If American activists helped propel women settlers' enfranchisement in the latter nineteenth century, American politicians also worked with British settlers on the project of maintaining white supremacy in the face of increasing Asian immigration during their respective mineral and industrial revolutions. Chinese immigrants were an especially important focal point for white labour mobilisation in the Australian colonies, South Africa, British Columbia and California. A British-American conversation was part of the traffic in ideas constructed by white men to bolster what W. E. B. Du Bois called the 'color line' – that bundle of discourses, practices, and policies that maintained white privilege and power. Lake and Reynolds (2008) trace the effects of writings and speeches made by individuals, including Theodore

Roosevelt, James Bryce and Charles Pearson in the US, Britain and Australia, respectively, through personal and political networks, showing how episodes of particularly intense debate over the nature and practice of racial difference played out across the Anglo world.

In more concrete terms, a literacy test in English like that first proposed by Earl Grey for New Zealand in the 1840s, but this time designed to exclude African-American voters in Mississippi, ultimately found its way into various British settler communities during the late nineteenth century. The test was first used in a British imperial context in southern Africa, after the liberal Cape Prime Minister J. X. Merriman had enquired of the American author on 'race', James Bryce, how it worked during a visit to London. Settler politicians in neighbouring Natal used such a test to check Indian immigration to the colony without racially explicit legislation, and the idea travelled back to London with the Natal delegates to the 1897 Colonial Conference. There, the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain commended it to representatives from the other self-governing colonies. Those representatives then ensured its adoption in relation to other groups of (non-white) immigrants elsewhere in South Africa and in Australia, where it became the basis of the 'White Australia' policy.

But here I want to return to the rights of indigenous peoples within the settler colonies as the nineteenth century drew to a close. There is not the space to enter into the convoluted discussions through which each settler parliament came to circumscribe or limit indigenous citizenship, so South Africa, ending the century and Victoria's reign with a war for sovereignty between two different kinds of white colonial polity, will serve as the particular case in point. When the mining magnate Cecil Rhodes gained tacit acceptance from the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, for a scheme to overthrow Kruger's Transvaal Republic, sitting as it was on top of the world's largest supply of gold, in 1895, his pretext was the political rights of Britons. The Transvaal was accused of the deliberate disenfranchisement of 'uitlanders' – non-Afrikaners who had migrated to the republic largely to work the gold diggings, and who were mainly English speaking. The uitlanders' claim to citizenship was constructed as Britain's imperial cause in the region, and was seen as justification enough for the ensuing South African War. But in securing those rights, the rights of black southern Africans were betrayed.

As we have seen, the Cape Colony's non-racial franchise of 1854 had left the door open to certain Coloured and African men with private property to exercise the vote, and there was narrower provision for them to do so in Natal. During the 1860s increasing numbers of mission-educated African farmers, mostly designated Mfengu in the Cape and Kholwa in Natal, succeeded in commercialising their production to supply the expanding towns of the mineral-bearing regions to the north. The real possibility of a black elite able to exercise considerable leverage at the polls by virtue of property and literacy prompted a concerted backlash within the two British settler societies. The incorporation of the Xhosa and Thembu-populated Transkeian territories into the Cape had already occasioned the exclusion of tribal tenure as a property qualification. In 1892, the individual qualification for the Cape franchise as a whole was raised in order to prevent a greater mass of Africans from exercising the vote. The Kholwa were told by Natal's new Secretary of Native Affairs that it would be defying 'the laws of nature' to distinguish

them from other Africans simply because of their superior education (Lambert 1995: 68). Accordingly, only three Africans had the vote in 1905.

Middle-class Coloureds, mostly in the western Cape, and wealthier Indians, mostly in Natal, found themselves in the same predicament as disillusioned African peasants, confronting white settlers determined to shore up racial exclusion. Indians who competed with white traders faced a spate of discriminatory legislation including exclusion from the franchise, prompting Gandhi's first campaign of satyagraha. Elite Coloureds, far from achieving their long-held goal of extending the Cape's non-racial franchise to the Transvaal and Orange Free State – something that the British authorities promised in return for their help in fighting the South African War and then abandoned – found that they too had to mobilise with greater effectiveness merely to defend the rights that they still held. Appeals to the Cape 'tradition' of 'equal rights for all civilised men', formed the agenda of new Coloured organisations, such as the African Political Organisation as well as later, African-led, movements. The African-edited newspaper, *Inkanyiso* expressed their primary dissatisfaction in 1895: 'It is neither wise nor christian like to preach the doctrine that all men are created equal before the God of the white man, and then, when the Native has accepted his faith, at the sacrifice of feelings handed down to him from generations, to treat him as a moral and social pariah' (quoted in Welsh 1971: 244).

CONCLUSION

As the Victorian period drew to a close, ideas of political rights and responsibilities were being articulated and contested more explicitly than ever before across the British Empire. The British government upheld a gradually inclusive view of citizenship. As Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain, for instance, objected to Natal's proposed blanket ban on Indians voting, pointing to the need to distinguish between 'the most ignorant and the most enlightened natives of India' and noting that 'in two cases . . . the Electors of important constituencies in *this* country have considered Indian gentlemen worthy . . . to represent them in the House of Commons' (quoted in Evans and Philips 2001: 101). The colonial governments, however, insisted on racially restrictive political rights, and all the British government could do was exercise 'moral suasion to perpetuate an increasingly fictive idea of . . . a shared imperial citizenship' (Gorman 2006: 28).

The debates over racial difference and capacity launched among Britons by the antislavery campaign at the very beginning of Victoria's reign had continued to be connected, through trans-imperial circuits of political discussion, to the political rights of Britons and those whom they had colonised throughout that reign. The supposed 'failure' of emancipation in the West Indies had provided settlers with a discursive terrain in which the rights of indigenous peoples no longer mattered. By appropriating pro-slavery arguments about the intractable nature of racial difference, and by disseminating these arguments throughout the empire in the face of humanitarian critique, settler communities had argued to the satisfaction of their metropolitan counterparts by the 1850s that 'black', 'brown' and 'yellow' peoples were incapable of exercising rights responsibly. Despite continuing humanitarian campaigns, indigenous peoples' own capacity to resist had counted far more in

shaping the forms of self-government that settler communities had obtained. Khoesan and African rebellion in South Africa and Maori warfare in New Zealand had given rise to more moderate forms of political exclusion than those that Aboriginal and First Nations people endured in Australia and Canada by 1901.

Within the Victorian empire, British settlers had deployed the same tactics that were associated with radical and popular political mobilisation and with the ‘advance’ of democracy in Britain, to extend their own rights as they restricted indigenous peoples’. These acts of exclusion were the result of relationships that actually helped to define both Britishness and indigeneity in multiple sites across the empire. What proved crucial to the outcome was a pervasive notion of racial difference. It was this ‘rule of difference’ (Chatterjee 1993: 10) that meant ‘as barriers of birth, wealth, property and gender fell away in both the settler colonies and Britain, indigenous peoples’ rights were increasingly circumscribed’ (Grimshaw, Reynolds and Swain 2001: 88).

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NOTES

- 1 In British Columbia, with its relatively small settler population, the very notion of indigenous enfranchisement was more contentious. This colony joined the Canadian federation (1867) only in 1871, and with the explicit exclusion of all ‘Indians’ (as well as Chinese) from the franchise.
- 2 I would argue that the form that Representative Government in the Cape took was also a deliberate contrast to the racially exclusive citizenship being constructed by the Afrikaner Republics on the southern African highveld. The constitutions of Natalia, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State are not normally discussed in accounts of British settler self-governance, but I would argue that their juxtaposition with the British experiment in the neighbouring Cape is significant. The presence of explicitly white supremacist practice on the empire’s doorstep allowed Cape and metropolitan Britons to celebrate the relative liberalism of their own governmental structures.
- 3 The progression from representative to responsible government was delayed to the early 1890s in both Natal and Western Australia, which also continued to receive convicts until 1868. These colonies had relatively small settler populations and vocal, if isolated, humanitarian campaigners.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

‘PRIVATE LAW’ AND THE LAISSEZ-FAIRE STATE



Michael Lobban

Sir Henry Maine’s aphorism that ‘the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement *from Status to Contract*’ (Maine 1861: 170) was not only the most memorable phrase written by a jurist that Victorian readers could hope to encounter. It was also a motto for a minimalist state, summing up the mid-Victorian consensus that its role should be limited to dealing with crime and social disorder, and to regulating a limited number of ‘intolerable’ problems, such as female and child labour or urban sanitation (Harling 2001: 112). In these areas of ‘public law’, a growing administrative state saw the establishment of police forces throughout the country, and the building of those classic disciplinary institutions, the prison, the workhouse and the asylum. But beyond these areas – in the realm of economic and social relations, the realm of ‘private law’ – the state was expected to be neutral. Private relations were to be left to regulate themselves through the rules of property and contract that were found in the common law. The common law itself, which had in the turbulent seventeenth century been a central component of political discourse, and which had seemed to embody the customs and practices of the free-born English people, was increasingly considered in the Victorian era as a neutral framework, expressing and facilitating a natural system of distributive and corrective justice that could be analyzed and ordered without any reference to its social context.

The vision of law promoted by ideologues such as Maine did not match reality. The common law was not merely an impartial set of rules enabling people to coordinate their transactions. It was an instrument of power: any judicial decision or piece of legislation that settled a rule of ‘private’ law enabled one class of litigant to invoke the power of the state in support of its own private interests over another. The rules that regulated economic and domestic relations could consequently be as contentious, as malleable and as contested as any other rules set by the state. They were not ‘found’, as many jurists liked to claim, but were fashioned, sometimes by parliament – after campaigns by interest groups seeking (or opposing) reform – and more frequently by the judges who sat in the superior courts of common law and equity. These judges were few in number: on the eve of the reforms of 1873–75 that reorganized the judicial system, 15 common law judges

and five Chancery judges – as well as a handful of ‘Law Lords’ in the highest court of appeal – decided all the reported cases that would serve as precedents, and determine the shape of the law.

In developing the rules as to what counted as property and which contracts were to be enforced, judges made policy. The choices they made were influenced by their social backgrounds and political views. Judges came from a narrow class. The overwhelming majority of Victorian judges were the sons of professional men, merchants or landowners. Their careers ensured that they were ‘among the most affluent professional men’ in the nineteenth century (Duman 1982: 105). Their political views broadly reflected those of the governing parties that had appointed them; though since judicial decisions had to be collegial, and were constrained by the need to develop coherent doctrine, party differences were generally not particularly significant (Lobban 2012). At the same time, the rules they articulated were often the product of power struggles between rival interest groups outside the court, who were prepared to incur the considerable cost involved in litigating to a final decision, in order to secure rules that would be to their advantage.

The law developed in Victorian courts aimed to secure the class and gender interests of the kind of men who ran both the legal and political establishments. Both judges and legislators sought to promote wealth while maintaining social stability, but the means they used to achieve these aims – and how they understood them – were not always the same. This reflects the fact that they looked at the problems to be solved from different perspectives. Whereas legislators made rules prospectively, and often on the basis of abstract views of policy, judges made them in retrospect, when faced with concrete individual cases. As a result, the judicial contribution to policy making was often significantly different from that of the legislature. Indeed, by the later nineteenth century, when reform of the franchise had broadened the base of the political nation, it was on occasion clearly out of step with what parliament desired. Throughout Victoria’s reign, for the average citizen, the rules that were developed in court were often at least as important as the rules legislated by parliament. Exploring how judges developed the law regarding economic activity and social relations can therefore give us an important insight into the nature of nineteenth-century governance, for it allows us to tease out languages of policy that were often absent in parliamentary debates.

Victorian judges did not have a doctrinaire commitment to the notion of *laissez-faire* or to the lessons taught by political economists. Rather, they developed policy by moulding and adapting ideas and attitudes that had a longer pedigree in the common law tradition. In particular, they developed two potentially contradictory languages. The first was the language of status, which – in spite of Maine’s dictum – continued to predominate in cases involving workers and wives. When developing the law of ‘master and servant’ and ‘husband and wife’, judges – who themselves were masters and husbands – generally sought to maintain status distinctions, which themselves derived from older common law and statutory rules. In an age of liberty and individualism, the status of workers and wives would remain subordinate, with the ultimate power over them of the master or husband protected. The second was the language of equity and morality. When dealing with economic disputes involving litigants of the same social status as each other – and of the same social status as the judges themselves – the courts took a different approach. Where

questions of status were not in issue, the courts were prepared to intervene to moderate the use of economic power, by making judgments and developing rules that reflected a notion of what was fair conduct and morally acceptable behaviour. Just as older notions of status persisted in the common lawyers' view of the household, so did older ideas of a moral economy persist in their view of the marketplace.

I

For proponents of laissez-faire economics, the phrase 'freedom of contract' connoted the right of individuals to determine their own economic rights and obligations without any regulation by the state. The phrase was most often invoked in the context of the agitation for company law reforms in the 1850s, which culminated in the enactment of the Companies Act of 1856, which introduced the most liberal and non-interventionist regime of corporate law found anywhere in Europe (Cottrell 1980: 42–52). The legislative policy of laissez-faire in the realm of joint stock enterprise would continue for the rest of Victoria's reign. Shareholders – who had been given the protection of limited liability in 1855 – were expected to take an active part in deciding how the company was to be set up and run, and in monitoring the way their investments were being managed after flotation (Taylor 2006: 164). Creditors were also expected to look out for themselves, in deciding whether or not to contract with the company.

The premise behind this legislative regime was that the market, and not the state, would regulate the economic relations between investors, managers and creditors. This was a policy designed for the good times, which proved singularly ineffective when times were bad, and companies failed. In the aftermath of the periodic crashes of the mid-Victorian era – such as the banking crises in 1857, 1866 and 1878 – and in the absence of legislative regulation, the courts had to develop rules not only to determine how to allocate liability for losses, but also to regulate how companies were to be set up and run. The judges who fashioned these rules were in many ways surrogate legislators, developing the law, case by case, in response to the litigation that came before them.

The cases they heard tended to involve litigants whose social and economic statuses were broadly similar, but whose position in the enterprise – as director, investor or creditor – might be at odds with each other. Each had a vested interest in the success of the corporate economy, but needed judges to help settle how that economy could be made to work most effectively for them. Such litigants were people the judges could identify with: any judge who had a life assurance policy might be both a creditor and an investor in a company that he had an interest in preserving. In developing new rules to sort out these problems in a series of cases in the 1860s and 1870s, the judges did not simply apply a hard-headed political economy of the market. Rather, they developed their own notions of the moral parameters of legitimate enterprise, balancing the rival claims of shareholders, creditors, promoters and directors (Cornish *et al.* 2010: XII: 422–24, 643–44). In an age when white collar crime remained largely unprosecuted (Robb 1992), it was left to the courts to set a code to outline what kind of conduct was legitimate on the part of promoters and directors. As numerous promoters found to their cost

in the 1870s, courts of equity were not prepared to allow businessmen simply to invoke the maxim of *caveat emptor* in defence of their sharp practice. As *The Times* noted: ‘bargains which in the precincts of the [Stock Exchange] simply excite admiration at the cleverness of the parties to them are rudely disallowed by the Judges who administer law in Chancery-lane’ (28 February 1877). In creating rules to protect investors in the corporate economy, judges were aware that the market could not be left entirely to itself. Courts responded to the litigation brought by investors who were vulnerable to being fleeced by unscrupulous businessmen by ensuring that the market observe some moral rules.

‘Freedom of contract’ was also invoked in a labour context. The concept itself was not unattractive to workers. For instance, Francis Place argued in 1824 that the legislature should ‘leave workmen and their employers as much as possible at liberty to make their own bargains in their own way’ (quoted in Steinmetz 2000: 266). What he had in mind was the freedom of workers to bargain collectively with their employers, with each side using its economic power as far as possible to secure its interests. But this was not the sense that employers put on the phrase: for them, it meant that individual workers should be strictly held to the employment they had voluntarily entered into, and that the individual contract of employment should not be interfered with by collectivities.

Relatively few cases involving workmen came before the superior court judges. The very high price of entrance into their courts meant that they were places for the middle class and aristocracy, rather than the poor. Rather than seeing workmen as equals, whose predicament could be sympathized with, judges categorized them as ‘servants’, who needed to be kept under control by their superiors, and who needed to be held to the labour contracts they had agreed to. In taking this approach, they were following a path that had long been set in the law by statutes regulating contracts of employment (such as the Master and Servants Act of 1823) or setting bounds to collective action (such as the Combination Act of 1825). These statutes had given magistrates a summary criminal jurisdiction, and the superior court judges had to interpret the meaning of such legislation only on rare occasions. But when they did so, they generally took the same view as employers, and made decisions designed to protect entrepreneurs from potentially indisciplined and disruptive workers, who were failing to act in ways expected of those of their status.

Throughout Victoria’s reign, the judiciary remained hostile to collective action by workmen. Rather than seeing trade unions as the product of workmen’s freedom to contract into collective action – parallel to the freedom of the investor to create joint stock enterprises – judges continued to see them as vehicles designed to interfere with the employer’s freedom to contract with the individual worker. They were able to apply common law rules against trade unions creatively, since the 1825 Act (which provided a summary penalty of three months imprisonment for any one who used threats, intimidation, molestation or obstruction against either other workmen or employers) had restored the common law jurisdiction over trade disputes, which had been removed only one year earlier. Peaceful collective action, if it was aimed at ‘dictating to the master whom he should employ’, continued to be regarded as a form of criminal conspiracy (*R. v. Bykerdike* (1832) 174 English Reports 62; Orth 1991: 92–98). Judges also began to apply to collective agreements

the common law principle that contracts in restraint of trade were not binding. When the judges held in 1855 that a bond made by employers fixing rates of pay in Wigan was unenforceable since it was in restraint of trade, it was not the employers' freedom of contract they had in mind. As Justice Crompton opined:

a decision in favour of this bond would establish a principle upon which the fantastic and mischievous notion of a 'Labour Parliament' might be realized for regulating the wages and the hours of labour in every branch of trade all over the empire.

Such a decision would lead to the most disastrous consequences' for the 'whole community' (*Hilton v. Eckersley*, 119 English Reports 789)

It did not take long for the courts to use the doctrine against trade unions. In *Hornby v. Close* (1867, LR 2 QB 153), the Queen's Bench held that a trade union could not use summary powers under the Friendly Societies Act to protect its funds from embezzlement, since it had the 'illegal' purpose of restraining trade.

The approach taken by the courts was increasingly out of step with public opinion, as in the aftermath of the 1867 Reform Act, the bases of the political nation represented in parliament broadened. In 1871, legislation was passed to remove the common lawyers' rule that any industrial action could constitute a criminal conspiracy simply because it threatened to restrain an employer's trade (Curthoys 2004: 142–65). However, judges continued to use the common law to limit the rights workers thought they had been given by statute, by developing their own policy, in a game of tug of war with the legislature. In 1872, Justice W. B. Brett convicted striking gas stokers of a conspiracy, since their conduct involved 'improper molestation to control the will of the employers' (Cornish *et al.* 2010: XIII, 676). After further legislation was passed in 1875, designed to remove the law of criminal conspiracy from trade disputes altogether, the judges in the 1890s developed a new tort of conspiracy, which was used to obtain damages from trade unions, and which was only ended by the passing of a new Trade Disputes Act in 1906 (Cornish *et al.* 2010: XII, 1049–67).

If the judges' approach to trade unions was designed to protect employers from collective interference with workmen's contracts, they remained well aware that the contract law that applied to workers was not the same as that which applied to traders, industrialists or merchants. The general rules of contract law, according to which parties took the risk that the contract would not be performed, and obtained compensation in damages, were regarded as inappropriate in the context of industrial employment, where the damage was done by large groups of workers, who could not be sued individually for compensation. The policy of the law was set by the 1823 Master and Servants Act, which permitted justices of the peace to imprison workers who broke their employment contracts by absence, disobedience or neglect (Hay 2004, Frank 2010). This was a policy that continued to be endorsed by the senior judges. As Chief Justice Erle put it in 1863, the threat of imprisonment was needed, since 'without some such check, [a master's] workmen might at any time frustrate all his arrangements' (*Lawrence v. Todd*, 143 English Reports 564).

The 1823 act only applied to those with the status of 'servants'. Interpreting what this meant, judges before Victoria's accession had held that only those who had contracted to *serve* could be embraced by the act. This meant that outworkers who were paid by the piece were excluded from its ambit, as well as professionals

such as attorneys (Steinfeld 2001: 125–53). However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, judges began to take a broader view of what constituted 'service', so that it also embraced piece or task workers. Judges also began to articulate a sharp distinction between menial servants and labourers, who were within the disciplinary jurisdiction of the master and servants legislation, and higher status employees who were not. The line was drawn by reference to class and social status: thus, in 1852, it was held that a governess could not be regarded as a menial servant, given 'the manner in which such a person is usually treated in society' (*Todd v. Kerrich* [1852], 155 English Reports 1298).

'Servants' were expected to obey any order given to them by their master, and could be dismissed for wilfully disobeying any lawful order (e.g. *Turner v. Mason* [1845], 153 English Reports 414). By contrast, higher grade 'employees' were justified in refusing to carry out orders that required them to undertake more menial tasks than they had been hired to perform (e.g. *Price v. Mouat* [1862], 142 English Reports 895). In determining whether employees had been wrongfully dismissed on the grounds of misconduct or negligence, courts considered whether the breach was serious enough to justify termination of the contract, or was the kind that could be paid for in damages – the standard kind of contractual analysis that superior court judges used in innumerable commercial cases (e.g. *Gould v. Webb* [1855], 119 English Reports 347). Such forms of contractual reasoning were not considered relevant to 'servants' charged under the 1823 act with neglecting their work, who were routinely imprisoned. Moreover, mid-century judges held that a period of imprisonment did not itself discharge the contract, so that a worker who refused to return to work committed a fresh offence for which he could be recommitted. This view was not demanded by contractual reasoning, but derived from a particular view of what was necessary for business. As Justice Colin Blackburn put it in 1866, it would be 'hard' for the master if a servant he had engaged for three years 'could, by being once punished for his breach of contract, get rid of it' (*Unwin v. Clarke*, 1 LR QB 423).

Judges interpreted other aspects of labourers' employment contracts in ways that were more favourable to employers than to workers. In an age where parties were meant to negotiate the terms of their own contracts, judges were prepared to imply terms into workmen's contracts that denied them the ability to sue their employers for compensation for industrial injuries. In a series of cases commencing in 1837, the courts held that workmen agreed to run the risk of being injured in dangerous workplaces by careless colleagues. Judges assumed that the level of risk was reflected in a worker's wages, and feared a flood of litigation that would result if they were able to sue their employers (Bartrip and Burman 1983: 103–25, Bronstein 2008: 19–31). Of course, they did not believe that workers had *actually* bargained to assume the risk. In the words of Justice Brett: 'it is impossible to say truly that when a workman makes his contract of service with his master, that servant has in his mind the recollection [...] that he may be injured by the negligence of a fellow servant' (*Parliamentary Papers* 1877: 285, q 1926). Rather than being rooted in a real contractual intention, judges from the beginning of the doctrine felt that to allow compensation for workplace injuries 'would be an encouragement to the servant to omit that diligence and caution which he is in duty bound to exercise on the behalf of his master, to protect him against the misconduct or negligence of others who serve him' (*Priestley v. Fowler* [1837], 150 English Reports 1033).

In the later part of Victoria's reign, the legal position of working people improved, thanks largely to the intervention of parliament. The criminal jurisdiction of the master and servants legislation ended, and a new Employers and Workmen Act was passed in 1875. The Employers' Liability Act of 1880 made it easier for workers to recover from workplace injuries by qualifying the 'common employment' rule, and the 1897 Workmen's Compensation Act gave specified workers a statutory right to compensation for industrial accidents, without needing to show any fault on the part of the employer or his servants. Nonetheless, the hierarchical disciplinary model of service did not disappear (Deakin and Wilkinson 2005: 74). For instance, the principle that lay behind the master and servants legislation – and which was given explicit form in 1867 – that workmen should be compelled to return to work, was continued under the 1875 act. Nonetheless, faced with an approach to labour questions by the judiciary, which was increasingly clearly out of step with the wider political consensus, the legislature had by the first decade of the twentieth century largely drawn the sting of the common law's backward-looking approach to labour, by creating special regimes for defined classes of 'workmen' (as with the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897), and by carving out exceptions to the broader rules of common law (as with the Trades Disputes Act of 1906).

II

Workers were not the only people who were gaoled for breaches of contract. At Victoria's accession, any person who had failed to pay a debt ran the risk of being imprisoned, either at the beginning of the legal process (by being arrested on *mesne* process) or at its end (on final process). In this area (as in labour matters), the courts inherited a tough statutory regime from an earlier era. The system of arresting those who failed to pay their debts was designed to provoke debtors to pay up at once, to secure their release. However, the system was far from efficient. Although the creditor was able to seize the debtor's body, he was prevented from getting much of his property. This allowed many debtors to defy their creditors, while living not in close confinement inside the walls of the debtors' prisons, but outside, within the area known as the 'rules' (Finn 2003: 121). At the same time, it was a system that left the question of imprisonment for non-payment entirely at the discretion of the creditor, rather than the courts.

By the time Victoria came to the throne, there had been a decade of agitation by lawyers seeking to reform the system, which only came to fruition after 1837. They wanted to ensure that the courts, rather than the creditors, would determine whether the financial conduct of the insolvent was sufficiently blameworthy for the disciplinary provisions of the law to come into effect; and to ensure that more of the debtor's property could be recovered. The policy of both legislators and lawyers in this area mingled together features of both the 'moral economy' and 'disciplinary' approaches we have already encountered. Since men and women of all classes could be debtors, and since debt was an economic relation not born of status, mid-century lawyers and legislators were keen to reject the idea that all those who failed to pay their debts merited disciplining. At the height of the ideology of 'freedom of contract', they recoiled from the idea that one should be gaoled simply for failing

to pay one's freely contracted debts. At the same time, they were loath to remove the threat of imprisonment altogether, with many arguing that working class borrowers lacking assets would only be able to obtain credit if the lender had the security of the threat of gaol. Consequently, although imprisonment for debt was abolished for large debtors in 1869, small debtors who failed to pay judgment debts continued to risk a prison term until as late as 1971.

The idea that different kinds of debtors were to be treated differently was hardly new. In contrast to ordinary debtors, insolvent traders had long been able to use the bankruptcy courts, where they could be freed of all their past debts and avoid the threat of imprisonment, provided they obtained a 'certificate of conformity'. The legislature drew a distinction between trading and non-trading insolvents, since it was felt that the failure of traders was generally the result of their blameless reliance on other traders who did not pay their debts, whereas non-traders had only their own folly and extravagance to blame for their insolvency. In both areas of bankruptcy and insolvency, reformers in the early years of Victoria's reign sought to reduce the amount of discretion creditors had to punish those who owed them money, and instead to give the courts a greater say in determining the debtor's fate. In so doing, they gave the courts a power to act as a moral arbiter, judging the blameworthiness of the debtor's conduct, rather than asking them to apply a fixed set of rules in a mechanical fashion. The 'science' of political economy did not in this area displace the 'art' of judging moral worth.

At the start of Victoria's reign, the trader's creditors had the power to decide whether the certificate should be granted; but in 1842, this power was transferred to the bankruptcy courts, as part of a policy to 'judicialize' a process that might end in imprisonment. In this process, bankruptcy courts effectively became courts of commercial morality, for the decision to grant or withhold a certificate in any particular case depended on the bankruptcy commissioners' view of the bankrupt's conduct as a trader. The notion that judges should decide questions of morality as well as law reached its apogee in the decades spanning the mid century, when they were given the further power to grant different classes of certificate, which had no legal significance beyond signalling to the commercial community just how blameworthy the conduct of the bankrupt had been.

Although non-traders were unable to be discharged of their debts through the bankruptcy procedure before 1861 (when the two systems were combined), they were able in the first half of Victoria's reign to obtain a discharge from prison by petitioning the Insolvent Debtors' Court. This court, which was first set up in 1813, and put on a permanent footing in 1838, could free any debtor who disclosed all his debts and who gave up his property to pay off his creditors. It could also delay his discharge from gaol, if he was guilty of any fraud in his conduct, or had run up debts without any reasonable means of paying them. Before 1842, debtors could only seek the intervention of the court after they had already been imprisoned; but thereafter they were allowed to apply for protection from being imprisoned, prior to being arrested in execution of judgment. The judges in this court used their powers to shield those they felt were morally innocent and to allow those they regarded as blameworthy to be gaoled. In their deliberations – which were regularly reported in the press – they often made clear what kind of business conduct they found acceptable on the part of creditors as well as debtors. For instance, in 1846,

Edward Napleton Jennings, a young Oxford undergraduate who had run up over £2,000 of debts in funding a very lavish lifestyle, was given protection from arrest by his creditors, who were principally Oxford traders. Rather than castigating the young rake, Commissioner Phillips criticized the traders who aimed to seduce young men fresh from school into buying their expensive goods, and denounced them for their 'dishonest conduct' (*The Times*, 1 January 1848). By contrast, where a debtor had failed to disclose all his debts, or been guilty of fraud, the judges could be tough, showing no sympathy even to poor hungry debtors, who were left without any means of subsistence by their creditors.

The mid-Victorian era saw something of a retreat from this moralistic judicial intervention in matters of insolvency, at a time when the commercial community was demanding less official interference (Lester 1995: 123–69). Under the regime introduced for larger debtors in 1869, the debtor was entitled to his discharge (as the certificate was now called) if he could pay ten shillings in the pound or if a special resolution of his creditors agreed to it. Imprisonment on final process was abolished, and debtors would only be gaoled for criminal offences. For the next 14 years, the bankruptcy regime was left very largely under the control of the creditors, with very little official intervention. 'Freedom of contract' now meant that creditors ran the risk of not being paid in full: just as creditors dealing with companies had to make their own risk assessments, so did those lending to individuals.

But this was a passing phase. It was soon evident that the unregulated market could not control fraudulent traders, any more than it could control fraudulent company promoters and directors. Growing concern over commercial morality accordingly led in 1883 to official involvement being reintroduced, through a new statutory regime. Henceforth, bankrupts were subjected to a public examination regarding their conduct and could only obtain a discharge after the court had considered a report by the official receiver. Further legislation in 1890 toughened the law, making it harder for the bankrupt to obtain a discharge save where he could pay 10 shillings in the pound or could prove his failure arose from circumstances beyond his control. The 1883 regime also made it a misdemeanour for an undischarged bankrupt to obtain credit without informing the creditor of his bankruptcy.

As with the law of employment, different rules applied when it came to the working class. Throughout the Victorian age, a distinct legal regime applied to small debtors. The procedure used in small debt cases was established by legislation in 1845, which restored imprisonment for debt for small debtors one year after Lord Brougham had abolished it entirely, in a rush of sympathy for the plight of the imprisoned poor that had unleashed a strong backlash from the commercial community. This legislation allowed creditors who had obtained judgments for debts under £20 to summon the debtor to a local court, where he would be examined about the debt, and could be ordered to pay off the debt by installments. If he had contracted the debt without having reasonable means to pay, he could be gaoled for 40 days on the order of the judge, a period of imprisonment that could also be imposed if he failed to keep up his installments. The tone of this legislation was clearly in line with other reforms in the law of debt in the 1840s. What was more controversial was its survival after 1869.



Figure 22.1 Hablot K. Browne illustration from *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens, nineteenth century. The Marshalsea becomes an orphan.
Mary Evans Picture Library

The continuation of a distinct rule for small debtors confirms that the Victorian law of credit had a class character. Historians have been divided, however, over whether this legislation was used by the county court judges to impose the strict discipline of the marketplace on working-class consumers (Rubin 1984, Johnson 1993), or whether these judges (who had a great deal of discretion in applying the law) were able to take a paternalistic or moral approach in enforcing the law, which was sensitive to the needs of working-class consumers. Margot Finn has argued that working-class debtors were often able to develop a range of strategies to stave off demands for payment without ending in gaol, and that they were 'assisted in these strategic manoeuvres by government-appointed judges who used the county court system as a public forum in which to articulate their own distinctive conception of a moral economy' (Finn 1998: 119). Realizing that working families needed to rely on credit, they defended the ultimate sanction of imprisonment as necessary to secure credit. At the same time, they used their powers to regulate credit, ordering the repayment of debts in installments, taking into account what a poor workman could afford to repay. They took a dim view of the circumstances in which credit was extended, might order extremely low rates of repayment, and even absolve the debtor of liability for credit that should not have been extended (Finn 1998: 132). In the hands of county court judges, English contract law had sufficient ambiguity to leave judges room to throw the risk on the creditor. This might suggest that judges dealing with all classes of debtors tempered the discipline of the law with a moral sensitivity as to what kind of indebtedness was blameworthy.

III

Those Victorians who most admired Maine's aphorism tended to be middle-class men of means, who were apt to lose sight of the fact that one could obtain an inferior 'status' through entering into a contract. It was not only servants who experienced such a transition through their contracts of employment. Any woman who married acquired a new and inferior status. By virtue of her marriage, she contracted into a set of common law rules, which put her wholly under the power of her husband. As Sir William Blackstone famously put it: 'the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband' (Blackstone 1765: 430). Although equitable devices could be used to soften the impact on the married woman of these common law rules, they remained the basis of the laws of marriage at the start of Victoria's reign. The inequality of the law, and the oppression it might expose married women to, led to a series of lengthy campaigns led by feminists throughout the reign, which resulted in reforms such as the Divorce Act of 1857 and the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882. To campaigners who struggled to obtain these reforms, the law that endorsed the husband's physical and economic power over his wife excluded her from the society of free-contracting individuals. The reforms were significant, but they were piecemeal and did not secure the full economic emancipation of the married woman. It would not be until the twentieth century that married women would gain the same property rights as men (Holcombe 1983).

At common law, on marriage all the wife's goods became the property of her husband, who could dispose of them as he chose. Although he could not dispose of her landed property without her consent, it was he who enjoyed the income from her estates. Since she had no legal personality apart from her husband, she could not contract in her own name, but only as his legal agent. She also had far greater difficulty in ending the marriage contract. While parliament allowed a man to divorce his wife on the grounds of her adultery alone, after he had obtained damages from her lover in an action for 'criminal conversation', she could only obtain a divorce if his adultery were aggravated by bigamy or incest; and she had no remedy in civil law against his mistress for seduction or loss of consortium. While wives could seek a judicial separation on the grounds of cruelty by the husband, the ecclesiastical courts took a very narrow view of what constituted cruelty, taking as their cue Lord Stowell's 1790 ruling (in *Evans v. Evans*, 161 English Reports 466) that proof had to be given of 'a reasonable apprehension of bodily hurt'. As the author of one treatise put it, the court could only put asunder those whom God had joined for the purpose of self-protection; for 'were it otherwise, the time of the Court might be consumed in domestic quarrels' (Shelford 1841: 427).

The courts also upheld patriarchal authority within the household in other ways. According to Leonard Shelford, a wife was

entitled to all reasonable liberty if her behaviour be not *very bad*; but where the wife will make an undue use of her liberty either by squandering away the husband's estate, or going into lewd company, the husband, in order to preserve his honour and estate, may lay such a wife under restraint.

(Shelford 1841: 667)

Early Victorian judges like John Taylor Coleridge were willing to endorse not only the notion that a husband had the right to reasonable confinement, but also a right of reasonable chastisement, which would entitle him to beat his wife, albeit 'not in a violent or cruel Manner' (*In re Cochrane* 1841, 4 *Jurist*: 534). Where husbands were violent, wives could however obtain the help of the courts, which would require men to give recognizances to ensure their good behaviour.

The law also gave the husband custody of his children. At the start of Victoria's reign, courts would compel mothers to hand back even small children to their father, unless they felt that the father would act with extreme harshness, or was likely to undermine their morals. It was on these grounds that Lord Eldon famously denied Shelley custody of his children in 1817 (*Shelley v. Westbrook*, 37 English Reports 850). But if the husband had a mistress who was kept separately from the children, the courts would return the children to their father. Even if the parents had made a provision in a deed of separation that children would live with their mother, courts would nevertheless grant the custody to the father (Shelford 1841: 680). It took the well-known campaign of Caroline Norton to start snipping away at this rule, first through the 1839 Infant Custody Act, which empowered the Chancery to give custody of children under the age of seven to their mother, provided she was not an adulteress.

If the 'default' position of the common law ensured the inferior status of the wife, families were also able to make their own arrangements – recognized by the courts of equity – which gave the wife greater agency. Couples whose marriage had broken down might not be able to divorce, but they were permitted to make separation agreements. Although ecclesiastical courts continued to hold that agreements not to sue for a restitution of conjugal rights did not bind the court, by the 1840s the court of Chancery was prepared to issue injunctions to prevent parties taking such cases to the ecclesiastical courts (*Wilson v. Wilson* [1846–48], 9 English Reports 870). Common law courts also upheld deeds by which the husbands agreed to pay their wives when they separated, and protected these separation deeds from the claims of the husband's creditors. Moreover, although courts regarded any provision in a separation agreement that gave custody of the children to the wife as against public policy, couples continued to include them, and act on them.

The law also offered numerous devices to allow families to give greater power to women over their property. Even before the Married Women's Property Acts, women had much greater economic agency than the common law position suggested. Many middle-class and aristocratic women had separate property, controlled by trustees, which had been settled on them in marriage or family settlements. Equity judges went a long way to find and protect separate property for women. If no trustees had been appointed, but it was clear that money was intended to be settled for the separate use of the wife, courts would regard her husband as trustee of her separate property; and her money would be shielded from his creditors. Chancery lawyers aimed to shield the separate property of the wife from her husband's assets in other ways, through devices such as the restraint on anticipation, which restricted her ability to dispose of her property, as by charging by mortgaging it. This was often a way of shielding a source of family income from the husband's creditors.



Figure 22.2 *Court of Chancery, Lincoln's Inn Hall.* Engraved by Constantine Stadler (fl.1780–1812), 1808 (coloured aquatint), Rowlandson, T. (1756–1827) & Pugin, A.C. (1762–1832) (after)/Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library

Arrangements could also be made empowering women to conduct independent businesses. Husbands could allow their wives to trade on their separate account, through prenuptial agreements vesting a separate estate in her trustees, or by postnuptial agreements, provided they were not made when the husband was insolvent (in which case the agreement would be regarded as an attempt to defeat his creditors). Anything the wife did in the conduct of her business would be regarded as having been done as an agent for her trustees, rather than as an agent for her husband. Even if no trustees had been named, courts of equity regarded her husband as the trustee where it was clear that he had agreed to her trading separately. In such cases, her trading assets were hers, not his.

As with other credit and debt cases, the judges had a good deal of discretion in dealing with questions involving the credit transactions of married women, both in managing the home and in managing their own businesses. The law was often more malleable than it might seem at first glance. A wife who managed the household had implied authority from her husband to act as his agent in buying goods for the home; but the courts held that if she exceeded her authority as agent by purchasing such extravagant items that no husband would have authorized, then ‘the tradesman who supplies the goods takes the risk’ (*Freestone v. Butcher* [1840], 173 English Reports 995). Since the wife had no contractual capacity herself, a trader who had supplied her without checking would find himself with no remedy. Traders ran particular risks in dealing with women who had left the marital home. In such cases, the husband was liable for his wife’s necessities, unless he had given her a separate allowance, or she had left the marital home in

adultery. Given the complexity of the rules, and the flexibility of their application, it was essential for traders to satisfy themselves of a woman’s creditworthiness before lending. The very malleability of the rules helped encourage the cautious giving of credit. Husbands and wives could therefore often find room to work the legal system to their own advantage, and judges were willing to bend the rules of coverture where it seemed fair to do so.

If families themselves could find ways around the strict common law rules of coverture, it required legislation to begin to address the inequality at the core of the marriage relationship. The law relating to divorce was reformed in 1857, when both ecclesiastical and parliamentary divorces were replaced with the new jurisdiction of a divorce court (Stone 1990: 368–90). The 1857 act preserved the double standard, according to which husbands could obtain divorces for adultery, while the wife needed also to show an aggravating factor, such as incest, bigamy, rape, cruelty or desertion for two years. The act also allowed the wife to obtain a judicial separation (short of divorce), on the grounds of adultery, cruelty or a two year separation. It also provided a remedy for wives whose husbands deserted them, only to return periodically to seize any money she had made from her own work, by allowing her to obtain an order from a magistrate protecting her money from being taken by her husband. This summary remedy was felt to be particularly important for poorer wives, who lacked the means to get to the superior courts. Several further reforms followed. Legislation in 1878 enacted that where a husband had been convicted of aggravated assault, the magistrate convicting him could order that the wife was no longer bound to live with him, grant her custody of children and order alimony to be paid. Legislation in the following decade provided that a husband who failed to comply with an order for restitution of conjugal rights could be ordered to make regular payments to his wife, and that his refusal to comply entitled her to a judicial separation. These provisions – as well as others passed subsequently to protect women from cruel or drunken husbands – proved particularly useful for working-class women.

With a steady flow of cases going to the divorce court, and with marital disputes increasingly becoming a regular feature of police court work, marital discord became an ever-more public matter. The court became a kind of public theatre, where moral lessons could be learned about appropriate marital conduct. Greater exposure to the nature of marital discord also taught lessons to the judges. It has been argued that one consequence of this was that judges, who were more and more exposed to the reality of domestic discourse, took a broader view of what constituted cruelty than had previously been the case (Hammerton 1992, Foyster 2005). By the mid 1860s, divorce court judges were no longer looking only for physical cruelty, and were prepared to take into account ‘degradation such as no lady is bound to bear’ (*Swatman v. Swatman* [1865], 164 English Reports 1467). The nature of patriarchal power over a wife’s body was also increasingly challenged in later nineteenth century courts. In 1891, the Court of Appeal held that a man did not have the right to the custody of his wife, and that she could obtain a writ of habeas corpus against him (*R. v. Jackson* [1891], 1 QB 671, see Doggett 1992: [Chapter 1](#)). A man who infected his wife with venereal disease could now be convicted of inflicting grievous bodily harm (*R. v. Clarence* [1888], 22 QBD 23).

IV

Although it is often assumed that nineteenth-century ‘private’ law was a neutral framework, which may have allowed social inequalities to be reproduced, but which did not cause them, it is evident on closer analysis that the law and the courts were a vital forum for making rules that structured and regulated relationships of power. Historians seeking to understand the nature of the Victorian ‘state’ therefore ignore the courts, and the framework of rules which they developed, at their peril. An examination of the policy of the courts reveals that a number of different policies were pursued at the same time, depending on which parties were before the courts, and which issues were being contested. The Victorian common law retained a strong commitment to maintaining certain status relationships, treating servants and wives in significantly different ways from the propertied man in the world. The Victorian judiciary was as reluctant as many Victorian legislators were to undermine these settled status positions. At the same time, despite the language of individualism and freedom of contract, judges often retained a commitment to a moral economy, which required fair dealing in the market.

The line of policy taken by the courts did not always reflect that taken by parliaments. On some issues (as with trade unions in the 1870s), the courts’ view was squarely at odds with that of the legislature; on others (such as company regulation), parliament seemed content for the courts to fashion policy as occasion required. Moreover, given the legislative quiescence on many aspects of social and economic life, it was the policy developed by the courts that was more relevant to men and women engaged in disputes about what rights and powers they had.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

DISCIPLINE



Barry Godfrey

The nature of ‘discipline’ in the Victorian period, who exercised it, who was subject to it, how was it achieved and who resisted it, has been the focus for academics across a broad theoretical range from Marxist theorists to Foucauldians (with historians struggling to steady the ship with some rigorous empirical research designed, in part, to give ‘bottom’ to the flightier structures erected by theoreticians). William Laurence Burn, whose 1964 study of British society a century earlier remains one of the most well-regarded and well-read studies of mid-Victorian society, explored concepts of liberty, authority, power, individuality, and collectivism. He considered that alongside social factors such as family, workplace relations, the educational realm, publicity, and reputation, discipline was also induced in individuals through the operation of legal mechanisms and their agents. The police, prisons, courts, and other forms of regulatory authority seemed necessary to Burn, to bound, or provide a cordon, around the unregulated freedoms of the 1850s and 1860s. The contest between the possibilities for new forms of living, entertainment, and social relationships offered by the fast growing Victorian economy and the rapidly growing imperial project, and the new disciplinary forms felt necessary to control, protect, and rule over subject populations at home and abroad, are open to many perspectives. This chapter therefore concentrates on just two issues: what new disciplinary apparatus were introduced in this period; and what was distinctively ‘Victorian’ about them and the way they operated?

The chapter begins by examining the changes in both the level and character of discipline, authority, and power, in three social and private contexts (public uniformed policing; the penal system; and the use of private policing and the criminal law within private workspaces). It moves beyond a study of the institutions of control to question why new forms of living and working were thought to require new disciplinary formats, and to ask whether the new technologies of control were distinctively ‘Victorian’? For example, the introduction of a publicly funded nationwide (if not national) uniformed police force between 1829 and 1856 has been described as ‘A New Engine of Power and Authority’ (Phillips 1980). But why was public policing introduced at that point, how successful was it in exerting authority, and were the ‘new’ police much different from the parish watches that had preceded

them? The scope, aims, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the police service will be discussed alongside similar questions about the mass prison system that was erected over the same period; and the legislative ‘cage’ that was instituted to control habitual offenders – something that successive Victorian governments became fixated upon from the late 1860s. The forbidding prisons and William Blake’s dark Satanic mills¹ have been emblematic of Victorian commercial and penal enterprise, but the less tangible disciplinary formations developed during the nineteenth century include the body of legislation aimed at controlling and incapacitating hardcore recidivist offenders, and the creation of a concomitant bureaucracy of supervision. Victorian attitudes towards habitual offenders, and the ever more determined attempt to survey and discipline them, may actually be a more enduring legacy of Victorian social policy than the now-crumbling prison estate.

POLICING PRE-1829

Policing existed before the landmark year of 1829 when Robert Peel’s Metropolitan ‘bobbies’ strutted onto the stage, and, as we will see, different forms of policing agency continued well into the later nineteenth century. In the Georgian period, many local initiatives served the interests of small groups. Landowners could band together to fund prosecution agencies, which would inquire and investigate when property was taken, and arrange the prosecution of offenders. Essentially these property recovery agencies, and there were hundreds that operated across England and Wales, were defensive and reactive bodies. In that respect they were similar to the ‘thief-takers’ who tracked down stolen property (mainly in the larger cities) and prosecuted offenders in return for sometimes extensive rewards (there were statutory rewards of up to £100 given out for the conviction of robbers in London). Thief-takers did not enjoy a good reputation. Some were accused of allowing young thieves to get away with crime until they were old and reckless enough to commit a capital crime: in which case the thief-taker would arrest them, prosecute them, and earn a large reward when they were subsequently executed. Jonathan Wild became a notorious figure, who, whilst highly successful at recovering stolen property also became a major receiver and commissioner of burglaries, and was eventually executed for his crimes in 1725 (Godfrey and Lawrence 2005).

The ‘old’ police system, which operated until the middle of the nineteenth century, could be said to have consisted of three main elements: the rural and urban ‘amateur parish constables’, the (mainly urban) semi-professional or professional ‘acting constables’, and the urban ‘watch forces’. Parish constables were respectable or established propertied men who were selected to serve, and who were expected to bear much of the financial burden of their office themselves. They organised the Parish watchmen, ensured that vagrants were moved on and that paupers were directed to the parish authorities, and carried out a range of other administrative tasks. They were broadly governmental officers of the local state, who, nevertheless, could enter houses to search for suspects, stop, search, and then arrest people suspected of serious crimes. If a prosecution was to follow, they arranged for the victim to pay for the costs of dragging the defendant to court, and to pay the witnesses for turning up to give their evidence. They were assisted in this (not always desirable duty) by the local Parish Watch.

This body of men, often ex-servicemen, operated at night when the local citizens were not deemed so capable of carrying out the informal surveillance of their own streets. Often derided as the elderly and incompetent weak link in the policing chain, the watch nevertheless carried out a frequent patrol of a small area of town and must have reassured the local population that someone with some authority was keeping an eye on their property on a regular basis. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, many watch forces had become highly sophisticated (Reynolds 1998: 63, 120; Morgan and Rushton 1998: 29; Paley 1989). They were not, however, beyond corruption, and they were not equipped to deal with large-scale public disorder, such as that which was looming in the growing industrial towns of the early-to-mid-nineteenth century such as Manchester (Hewitt 1996).

Thief-takers and other private agencies are sometimes compared with nascent forms of public policing such as the Bow Street Runners (Cox 2010) and the Parish Watches. These bodies nominally operated on behalf of all citizens in many towns and cities, and were financed by the rates or through the magistracy, but they were still substantially different from the publicly funded uniformed police that Robert Peel was determined to bring in. He was aided in his efforts by the growing criticism of the Parish Watch system that intensified during the early part of the nineteenth century, and eventually led to a Royal Commission, which recommended the introduction of a more efficient and larger uniformed body of men. These were to form a more professional and, more importantly, a much more proactive force in the country. Many historians have seen this as an important watershed or disjuncture in the organisation of law and order in England and Wales, but what was so startlingly ‘new’ about the ‘New Engine of Power and Authority’ (Phillips 1980), and why did the Victorian ‘bobby’ become such an enduring symbol of ‘the peaceable kingdom’ (Emsley 2002)?

POLICING 1829–1901

The first step in the rather convoluted construction of the ‘New Police’ was the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. In 1822 Sir Robert Peel had become home secretary and, partly reacting to concerns over radical demonstrations, and partly influenced by his experiences in Ireland, argued the need for a new ‘vigorous system of police’. In 1829 the Metropolitan Police Improvement Bill was passed and 3,000 uniformed constables were appointed. Initially there was a period of confusion when the new and the old forces worked in parallel, after which the 1839 Metropolitan Police Bill established their primacy, not that the extension of the ‘police idea’ outside of London and the major towns and cities was straightforward. Landowners in the shires complained that the New Police were expensive, and anyway they had recourse to their own private systems of security (and indeed there was an increase in the number of private prosecution societies after 1829 in the countryside, see Philips 1989: 113–70). Radicals were alarmed by the apparent ‘military’ character of the uniformed men who practised drilling and carried cutlasses, and regional authorities resisted more centralised control of their areas of responsibility. Thus, as Emsley (1996: 41) noted, ‘as the 1840s dawned there was still no single model of policing dominant in England’. Some areas had not established borough forces; some rural areas were un-policed

(or not formally policed anyway), and after being in place for less than 20 years, the police idea needed reformation (Hart 1955).

The 1856 County and Borough Police Act required the justices of the peace in any county where a constabulary had not already been established to establish a sufficient police force. Where the secretary of state received certified notice that an efficient police force had been established, then one quarter of the costs of pay and clothing for constables would be met by the Treasury (three inspectors of constabulary would authorise the payment if they were satisfied with the force's efficiency). The Act also mandated that boroughs of less than 5,000 people who wanted to maintain a separate police force were to receive no financial support, thereby encouraging smaller forces to consolidate with the county police. Even after the mid century, and despite the 1856 act, policing in England was still a patchwork of different types of forces operating in their own areas, with their own procedures, ways of collecting crime statistics, and operational norms (Steedman 1984; Storch and Philips 1999). However, by the late 1850s the police force and the ways in which they worked would already be recognisable to today's police officers. They also provided a model for the development of police services across the British Empire (at least at first, see Petrow 2005). In some geographical locations, form followed function, of course, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the 'Mounties') rode horses like 'Wild West' sheriffs not because they had similar policing philosophies to the Americans but because beat policing on the English model was impossible in rural Canadian conditions. It was the same with the South African veldt and the Australian bush. In these areas mounted and military styles of policing predominated (see Graybill 2007; Jones and Vagg 2007; Lin 2007; Weaver 1995). The ethos and aims of policing tended to be an influential model for colonial policing. In the urban areas of the empire, local forces looked more like the Metropolitan model, but, in practice, the often brutal policing of colonial subjects differed considerably from the perceived restraint demonstrated by British police officers 'at home'.

Proponents of progressive 'Whig' history have seen the development of policing as a slow emergence of order from chaos, and efficiency from incompetence (Reith 1943; Critchley 1967, 1970). Ad hoc and highly selective crime figures garnered and constructed by Peel and the Royal Commissions convinced post-war historians that crime had been rising before 1829, that the Parish Watch were too slow, corrupt and infirm to quell the rise, and that after their introduction the New Police had been largely successful in sweeping the streets of crime, juvenile delinquency, and disorder. During the 1970s, revisionist historians began to question these orthodoxies. Storch (1975, 1976), for example, argued that the 'New Police' were brought in to discipline the working classes and make them suitable for the new industrial forms of capitalism:

the monitoring and control of the streets, pubs, racecourses, wakes, and popular fêtes was a daily function of the 'new police' [...] In the northern industrial towns of England these police functions must be viewed as a direct complement to the attempts of urban middle-class elites – by means of educational, temperance, and recreational reform – to mould a labouring class amenable to new disciplines of both work and leisure [...]

(Storch 1976: 481)

The opposition to the New Police in the 1850s and 1860s seemed to suggest a working-class resistance to the disciplines of industrial capitalism, and appealed to historians in the 1970s who were sympathetic to the labour movement at that time. The revisionists were influential, however, because the evidence they produced was bolstered by the research of historians such as Reynolds and Paley in the 1990s. Reynolds (1998) and Paley (1989) re-evaluated the effectiveness of the Parish Watch, revealing that they were often as efficient in their duties as were the New Police. Recent work by Cox (2010) and Tennant (2011) has further questioned the importance of 1829 as the watershed year when policing changed, and so has recent research on private policing in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. Take, for example, the Worsted Committee, which had been established by legislation (Geo.III c.II, 1777), originally in order to limit appropriation in the domestic textile systems of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire (Soderlund 1992).² Later adapting their detective methods to the context of factory production, they continued as one of the most important employers' policing and prosecution agencies for nearly 200 years (Godfrey 1999, 2002). The continued use of the criminal code against labour did not fall into disuse after the factory system became dominant (although employee theft was more prevalent in the nineteenth-century industries where the workers were not working under direct supervision, as they were in the factories, see Davis 1987, 1989: 407; Philips 1977: 177–95). Indeed 2,321 factory textile workers were prosecuted for illegal appropriation just in the West Yorkshire textile



Figure 23.1 Inside one of the prison buildings at Presidio Modelo, Isla De la Juventud, Cuba. © Friman

factories between 1844 and 1876. So, in those geographical areas at least, private forms of policing continued well after they were supposed to have died out.

Current historical research tends to accept that the development of policing is not straightforward, and takes elements from both ‘Whig’ and ‘revisionist’ histories (Emsley 1996; Lawrence 2000). What is less contentious, however, is the view that the introduction of public uniformed policing between 1829 and 1856 changed the character of order maintenance and crime control, and that the British constable has proved to be one of the most recognisable and enduring symbols of the Victorian Age (Gatrell 1990). Monolithic forbidding Victorian prisons such as Pentonville (erected in 1842) and Wandsworth ‘Scrubs’ (built in 1851), together with a large prison population, could be said to be the second most distinctive feature of Victorian social policy. To what extent were these prisons the Victorian realisation of eighteenth-century ideals (Bentham’s Panopticon in Victorian bricks), and how did the system change due to the realities of managing a large penal estate?

THE PENAL REALM

When Victoria ascended the throne, those of her subjects found guilty of serious crimes under the Bloody Code may have expected to be hanged at Tyburn or some other place of judicial execution (Hay 1975; Gatrell 1994). Few were incarcerated in a prison, which was reserved for debtors, or for those minor offenders who could not pay court fines and were imprisoned in default (Emsley 2005: 287). However, by the 1830s only murderers were regularly ‘launched into eternity’ for their crimes. The majority of offenders, even petty thieves, would be flung far from English shores in a system of penal transportation that eventually saw over 50,000 offenders sent to the American colonies, and nearly 170,000 sent to the Australian colonies.

The ‘First Fleet’ carried 750 convicts to New South Wales in 1788, and subsequent penal transports carried offenders predominantly to the eastern Australian colonies from the British Isles, but also from other outposts of the empire (Hughes 1987). When the colonies in New South Wales began to grow into viable economic and social communities, the colonists there successfully agitated to end transportation. So, in the first years of Victoria’s reign, the convict transport ships were diverted from New South Wales to Van Diemen’s land (Tasmania) until 1856 when transportation ended there as well. Western Australia successfully petitioned the British government to have convicts sent there to augment their struggling labour force, and nearly 10,000 convicts were sent to Western Australia between 1850 and 1868 (Godfrey and Cox 2008). A last spasm of transportation also saw 9,000 convicts sent to Gibraltar (but that too ended in 1875). By the 1850s, convict transportation had been considered no longer viable, and a prison building programme was initiated. Construction work on Millbank Prison began in 1812; Pentonville Prison, with its innovative ‘separate system’ of solitary confinement was opened in 1842. By isolating inmates from moral contagion by other prisoners, and exposing them only to religious instruction, it was believed that prisoners in Pentonville would reform themselves. Prisoners were to be left on their own in a cell for months at a time, save for regular visits from the prison chaplain. As McGowen puts it:

The prison was a monument to faith in an ideal. It became the model for the construction of many local prisons in the decades that followed and attracted worldwide attention. The prison held 250 prisoners in separate cells. Four wings radiated out from a central point, from which one could observe each cell door. The construction of the walls hindered communication between prisoners, and even the guards wore padded shoes so that they would not disturb the silence. . . . Prisoners wore hoods when they emerged from their cells. Their names were replaced by numbers. They had separate stalls in the chapel as well as separate exercise yards. Pentonville represented the apotheosis of the idea that a totally controlled environment would produce a reformed and autonomous individual.

(McGowen 1995: 92)

Rather than reform, the system promoted insanity, and was quickly reformed, or modified, into a 'silent system'. Advocates of the silent system saw prison as a place largely of punishment and deterrence, where the personality was altered not through a sudden religious conversion deriving from within an individual, but through the activity of a carefully calibrated and rational system of punishments and rewards (Forsythe 1990). In practice, prison regimes differed widely in different gaols depending on whether they were convict prisons (which housed the more serious offenders) or local gaols, and also with the philosophies of individual governors.

In any case, by the 1850s, imprisonment had become the norm for almost all serious crimes. During the 1860s, over 90 per cent of those convicted of indictable offences went to prison (Wiener 1990: 308). Eventually the mass prison system that is recognisable today was established, with 116 prisons in service by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and they were then organised into a national system in 1877 (McConville 1981, 1995). As [Figure 23.2](#) shows, the prison population rose (mainly in the County Local prisons, but also in convict prisons) throughout the Victorian period, and only fell in the twentieth century.

The reasons for the move from punishing the bodies of criminals through physical punishments, to punishing the minds of offenders through incarceration, are much theorised, but not resolved. Again, traditional accounts emphasise the progress of humanitarian reform, asserting that the spectacle of the condemned writhing on the gallows jarred against new civilising sensibilities (Radzinowicz and Hood 1986). With a slightly different emphasis, Wiener (1990) argues that the corrupting 'thrill' seemingly gained by execution crowds, the fears of the authorities that the deterrent impact was minimal, and the fact that onlookers presented a public order threat when popular men were hanged, were all important factors in the ending of public executions in 1868. Others, such as McGowen, have suggested that wider social and political factors have customarily been ignored by proponents of the 'progress' argument but need, equally, to be taken into account (McGowen 1983). Rusche and Kirchheimer were equally dismissive of bourgeois notions of progressive reform. In a work of classical Marxism originally published in 1930 (and published in English in 1968), they argued that there was a relationship between certain forms of punishment and particular 'modes of production'. Study of nineteenth-century penal theory, or following the history of ideas, was unnecessary they argued, since it was the underlying *economic structure* of society

that held the key to the rise of the prison – in essence that ‘every system of production tends to discover punishments which correspond to its productive relationships’ (Rusche and Kirchheimer 1968: 5). If that was the case, then industrial forms of production required industrial forms of punishment, and a system was needed where thousands of offenders could be reformed into disciplined docile workers.

Marxist analyses that link modes of production to modes of punishment in this direct manner appear to be overly reductive. However, one could argue that they influenced if not persuaded the theorists who came after them (Foucault 1977; Ignatieff 1978, 1983; and modern Marxists such as Melossi and Pavarini 1981). Those theorists themselves became very influential in modern criminological thinking. As Paul Rock noted: ‘Michel Foucault’s dramatic simile of Jeremy Bentham’s model prison, the Panopticon, was put to massive use in criminology. . . so, as Foucault and those who followed him wished to argue, modern society is coming to exemplify the perfection of the automatic exercise of power through generalized surveillance’ (Rock 2007: 22).

Foucault’s view that a wide range of institutions – the prisons, hospitals, work-houses and army barracks – were ‘mechanisms of control’ where new types of ‘bureaucratic’ discipline were vested is an attractive one (Foucault 1977: 177). For Foucault, the key to an understanding of the prison was primarily a consideration of the changing nature of politics and society in the nineteenth century. However, as historians have pointed out, the move to mass incarceration did not coincide with the economic (or the institutional histories) that Foucault describes (see Spierenburg 1991). Like orthodox Marxist accounts, Foucault’s work lacks sufficient

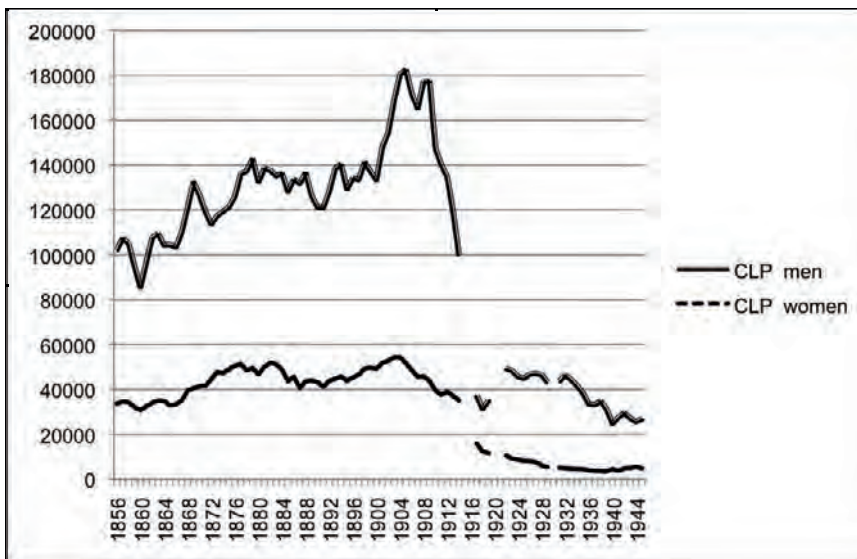


Figure 23.2 Committals made to county local prisons 1857–1940. Figures taken from Godfrey Cox, 2009.

engagement with detailed empirical historical research to be entirely convincing, despite the thrust of his work being intellectually appealing on many levels.

As with the development of policing, it is important not to see the historical development of the prison, and the end of punishments being visited on the body as a smooth continuum of humanitarian reform, nor of ever increasingly heavy levels of discipline, so perhaps the ‘penal-welfare complex’ described by Garland (1985) offers the best perspective of the long-term changes in the forms of punishment. Garland’s theories explain how reforming policies could, paradoxically, produce harsher levels of discipline, and also draw in more and more people into its net. He can, therefore, account for the ever larger prison populations in the nineteenth century, as well as the creation of specialist semi-carceral institutions for problematic social cases such as persistent drunks and the ‘feeble-minded’ – both of which were significant features of late Victorian penal policy (Garland 1985: 12).

By the mid century there had been a progressive intrusion of the law into the private sphere of the workplace; the public streets were patrolled by the police, and a capricious system of capital punishment had been exchanged for a calibrated rational system designed to ‘grind men good’ (De Lacey 1981). At the same time, the tools to examine what impact those changes had made to society were introduced. Governmental statistics would eventually come to form the basis for many policy initiatives emerging later in the nineteenth century.

In 1810 in England and Wales, the House of Commons arranged for the collection of information on the number of particular types of crimes committed. Similar rudimentary counts were carried out in France from 1827, and these became the model for (eventually more sophisticated) schemes in Belgium, Sweden, Austria, parts of Germany and America. The British Home Office themselves improved their collecting and recording systems in 1834 (when they grouped the offences for which they were recording committals into six broad categories), and from 1856 the criminal statistics were annually collected and published, enabling comparisons to be made over time (although it is undeniable that there are many acknowledged problems with the accuracy and validity of nineteenth-century criminal statistics, see Godfrey, Lawrence and Williams 2007 for a summary).

The published criminal statistics generally reassured policy makers and the public that progress was being made. Crimes of violence were falling, and property crime rates were lower than those in other European nations. Commentators praised the English miracle of reducing crime simply by the mere presence of the citizen in uniform, the British Bobby. Yet the statistics, once refined, also identified a group that seemed determined to resist the police, society, and the whole civilising process. In the midst of the prosperity and the more settled social conditions of mid-to-late Victorian society when the generally respectable working classes had been subsumed within wider democratic and social processes, many thousands of people still toiled in awful working conditions, lived in sub-standard housing, and barely scratched a living. Some people met their need for food and shelter through crime, through prostitution, or through working in the marginal industries, which invited the disapproval of polite society, and together they formed what came to be regarded as the ‘residuum’. Stedman Jones described this putative group as a ‘small and hopeless remnant’ of habitual drunks, petty thieves, vagrants, and wandering

lunatics (Stedman Jones 2002: 320) – those who, by virtue of their inability to adapt to the realities of mature industrial capitalism were confined to poor housing, poor education, the workhouse, and ultimately the prison (see Mayhew 1862; Godfrey *et al.* 2007). Increasingly from the 1860s existing measures against the immoral and criminal poor were thought insufficient to cope with the problem of the Victorian ‘underclass’ (especially after the garrotting panics of 1861 and 1862, see Davis 1980). As further evidence of the ineffectiveness of penal sanctions, the number of recidivist offenders languishing in Victorian prisons increased throughout the nineteenth century: despite the vast expense and huge investment in the penal and policing estate, it appeared to the public (and the increasingly influential newspaper industry) that the gaols were not harsh enough, and the police were not active enough in the ‘war with crime’ (Baker 1889).

The disciplinary focus narrowed onto a small group of people who appeared to be a debilitating drain on society. Although their criminality was primarily the result of poor life chances that existed for many people in this period, and a paucity of help for those who wanted to reform, theories based on heredity replaced the idea that criminals were immoral or simply amoral. A near consensus was constructed in medical, criminological, religious, and fictional publications from the 1870s onwards (although one could argue that their aetiological provenance was Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* published in 1859). Publications by Henry Maudsley (1874), Cesare Lombroso (1876) and Francis Galton (1864/65) all promoted ideas based on the theory that there was a genetic and hereditary disposition to ‘viciousness’ or criminality, and that certain types of physiognomy betrayed those predisposed to a criminal nature (see Horn 2003; Kelves 1985; Kerr and Shakespeare 2002; Pick 1989; Rafter 1997). Policy makers reacted to these new theories by attempting to survey and incapacitate persistent and dangerous offenders.

The first important salvo in the new ‘War with Crime’ was the 1869 Habitual Offenders Act, brought in by an incoming Liberal administration determined to address societal problems. The act applied to all those who received a second conviction for felony, and placed them under police supervision for a minimum of three years and a maximum of seven years. It mandated supervised offenders to state where they lived, when and where they were intending to move to, and to report fortnightly to a local police station. Those details were recorded locally, and then collected together in a Habitual Offenders Register that was kept in London, and regularly updated by the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis. If supervised offenders were found in suspicious circumstances, or were not able to prove that they were making an honest living, they could be imprisoned by a magistrate for up to 12 months. This, naturally, could have had a substantial impact on the gaol population, since supervised men found it difficult to find work, but easy to fall foul of the reporting system. In practice, it was the sheer volume of people that the police found themselves responsible for supervising that brought the system crashing down. The numbers were simply unmanageable for the police – a staggering 5,638 people tried between the introduction of the act on 11 August 1869 and 31 December 1869 became subject to police supervision. It was estimated that 25,000 ex-offenders would be under police supervision at any one time under the 1869 act. A new act was quickly passed to try and remedy the problem of over-supply.

Just like the 1869 act, the 1871 Prevention of Crimes Act also placed a significant emphasis on watching over offenders and punishing those upon whom suspicion fell. However, the period of supervision, and indeed whether it was imposed at all, was left to the discretion of the sentencing judiciary. This was a much tighter and targeted response to the provisions of the 1869 act. The number of those sentenced to supervision halved between 1870 and 1872 (from around 3,500 to around 1,500, see Godfrey *et al.* 2011).

Taken together, the Habitual Offenders Acts (as the 1869 and 1871 acts came to be known) both borrowed and intellectually interacted with nineteenth-century colonial practices, such as the Criminal Tribes Acts in India (Brown 2001, 2005). The principal characteristics of British habitual offender legislation – the supervision and the triggering of heavy prison sentences when a certain number of offences were committed – were exported globally through colonial routes (in the Caribbean, Africa, Australia, see Pratt 1997) or to Anglophone countries that appeared to share similar outlooks to the ‘crime problem’ – the United States, for example (Godfrey *et al.* 2011).³ In Britain, the ultimate expression of incapacitating the dangerous came in 1908, when the Preventative Detention Act attempted to consign potentially violent or highly persistent offenders to long periods of detention on the grounds that they might commit crimes, rather than because they had done so. It would be consistent to include this act within any evaluation of Victorian legislation, since the ideas that led up to it were starting to form from the 1860s onwards. Even before the beginning of the First World War, the act was a dead letter, its use severely restricted by Home Secretary Winston Churchill in 1911. The period before the First World War was also the point at which high penal populations began to rapidly descend and then plateau for the first half of the twentieth century. In terms of the surveillant and disciplinary state, Victorian ideas seemed to have run their course, but were they really ‘Victorian’ ideas?

CONCLUSION

There is clearly much debate about the essential character of ‘Victorianism’ and what, if anything, was distinctively Victorian about the changes that occurred between 1837 and 1901 (Hewitt 2006). In providing a sequence of acts, institutional changes, and parliamentary initiatives it is easy to convey the impression that a seamlessly progressive disciplinary grip was extended across the land. However, it must be remembered that the New Police were resisted when they were introduced, particularly in the northern industrial towns. Even when they became the natural route to legal recourse for most victims, it appeared that they were used instrumentally, with people reporting crimes to the police if they felt that other informal routes to justice – vigilantism and rough music for example – were unviable. Moreover, as the modern debates about the efficiency of the police agencies operating before 1829 show, ideas about policing were long in development and not freshly minted in the early Victorian period. The New Police *were* different in that they were proactive in preventing crime, whereas prosecution associations, and so on, were merely reactive, but there is a long lineage to the idea of policing. This could also be said about ideas regarding the proper punishment of offenders, and although mass incarceration started in the Victorian period,

it was expediency rather than design that prompted this shift. If penal transportation had continued to be a viable option, then eighteenth-century Benthamite philosophies might have continued to lie dormant, and never found form in Pentonville and other prisons.

The Habitual Offenders Acts, and the frenzy of activity around recidivist offenders in the 1860s and 1870s, could also be considered merely a hyperbolic ratcheting up of attention on the old problem of the undeserving and criminal poor and vagrant (see Sharpe 1999). The Habitual Offenders Registers, on the other hand, were a *new* and a *unique* contribution. It was the interconnectivity of the new technologies of discipline that were distinctively ‘Victorian’. For example, the creation of a huge system of bureaucracy in the criminal justice system, whereby offenders were photographed, their previous offences detailed, and recorded locally and centrally in the Habitual Offenders Registers – all of which was available to police/prison officers – and which rendered offenders both traceable and ‘known’ in ways that were unimaginable at the time the New Police were introduced. This form of bureaucratic enterprise extended across the British Empire. Not only are court and police records across the Anglophone world remarkably similar, but many systems of recording habitual offenders are the same in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and so on, because they are all modelled on the British system. The bureaucratic turn was not confined to the penal realm, however, and factories too adopted similar systems to record the workplace behaviour of employees – disciplinary events, warnings, dockings of pay, and so on. Employee records could be shared between factories, and the fact that references were now needed for factory employment meant that employees who had broken the law (and who had been dealt with by the local justices) could be sacked from work, and indeed never regain employment in that region.

The attempts by governments today to exert a mass system of discipline and surveillance – national policing, ID cards, data-system linkages – which are now becoming realisable due to digital advances, were definitively and distinctively Victorian in their inception. Like the Habitual Offenders Registers, however, there are problems; the volume of traffic, for example. The sex offender register established by legislation in 1997 had 8,000 people on its books in 2000 (Plotnikoff and Woolfson 2000). By 2006 the number had grown to 30,000, with approximately 10–14 per cent growth each year. The ‘No Fly List’, which attempts to stop terrorists boarding aircraft, now holds over 44,000 names. A similar register – the Terrorist Watch List – holds over 1,000,000 names. Many people on the nineteenth-century Habitual Offenders Registers, as with modern lists of potential threats, were ‘lost to the system’ as people slipped out of one identity and moved elsewhere to avoid the disciplinary gaze or evade their bureaucratic record (see Godfrey *et al.* 2011). As far as the disciplinary apparatus of the criminal law and its agents are concerned, the characteristically Victorian vaulting ambition that underlay the sweeping changes introduced in this period (public policing, mass incarceration, huge bureaucratic structures) masked a series of stuttering, inchoate, incoherent, competing, and faltering initiatives that together had only partial success in achieving their aims. Yet (somehow) these technologies achieve a solidity of form when viewed in retrospect, and together they form a legacy of Victorian ideas in today’s criminal justice system.

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NOTES

- 1 The internal mechanisms of control in the workplace are discussed elsewhere in this book.
- 2 Thousands of workers appropriated raw wool, finished cloth, and worsted ‘waste’ from their workplaces for their own domestic household use, or to sell on to others. Workplace appropriation exemplified the considerable conflict between notions of customary right and property rights in the nineteenth century, at a time when the wage was becoming increasingly standardised as a solely cash payment.
- 3 Habitual offender legislation is still popular in some countries (24 US states have three-strikes style legislation, most notably California; and the Sentencing and Parole Reform Bill aimed to introduce similar legislation to New Zealand in 2010).

PART IV

KNOWLEDGE
AND BELIEF



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

WORLDS OF VICTORIAN RELIGION



Jeffrey Cox

When Matthew Arnold heard the ‘melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, retreating’ of ‘The Sea of Faith’, he was invoking a master narrative that achieved virtual consensus in the Victorian world. The underlying metaphor for religious change was the downward slope from a Christian past to a secular future. I do not intend in this chapter to challenge Arnold’s master narrative or the Victorian orthodoxy, although I have done that elsewhere (Cox 2010), but instead to substitute a different metaphor, that of the bell-shaped curve. The most interesting characteristic of Victorian Christianity is that it was becoming more rather than less important. It is the upward slope of the bell-shaped curve (which curved downward in the twentieth century) that is the topic of this chapter.

One of the most remarkable documents of the Victorian age is the report of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, taken at a point somewhere along the top of the bell-shaped curve. Government officials attempted to count every single Sunday worshipper in England and Wales on a rainy Sunday in March (Census of Great Britain 1851 1852–53). The census allows us to cast a searchlight onto the vast network of religious institutions – churches, chapels, Sunday schools, mission halls, and religiously affiliated schools – in England and Wales (Snell and Ell 2000). In England and Wales there were 34,467 places of public worship – 14,077 belonging to the established church (Pickering 1967: 4). Religious institutions were everywhere – so much a part of the architectural and social landscape that their presence was simply taken for granted – and they were growing. Despite the hand wringing about working-class alienation (which was very real), religious activists were so aggressive in their institution building that it was difficult to avoid being caught up in the net of religious activity at some point in the course of a lifetime.

The census suggested that the overall number of people who attended church ranged from 41 per cent of the total population to 58 per cent of the ‘eligible’ population, i.e. a wild guess by the census takers of the number who *could* attend on Sunday, excluding young children, disabled persons, the elderly, and those required to work. If they were right, roughly half the adult population actually attended a place of worship on an ordinary Sunday. Yet instead of dealing with it as a success story, Victorian observers concluded that the churches were a failure.

They believed that a nation in which only half the population attended church was an unchurched nation. The second conclusion that informed public debate was the documentation by the census that only half the churchgoing population attended the established Church of England.

With the advantages of a century and a half of hindsight, we can see that as the first industrial and urban nation (however defined) to experience broad freedom of religion, Britain was going through a period of religious expansion. The rapid growth of religious institutions was difficult for Victorian observers to comprehend because of a strong sense of British history as Christian history, of a past in which every person in Britain was a Christian believer and regular churchgoer. Many commentators noted the growth of religious ideas and institutions in the nineteenth century, but in the end those ‘facts’ were subordinated to a master narrative that later came to be called ‘secularization’. Familiar with a religious settlement in which every person lived in a geographical parish and was baptized into the established church, Victorians struggled with a world of religious voluntarism in which the established churches had to compete with openly tolerated indifference, and with an array of aggressive alternative Christian denominations.

By 1851 the people of Britain were more or less free to choose whether to attend church on Sunday. It was that freedom to choose that led to the choice of Sunday attendance as an index of religious allegiance, even though Sunday church attendance is only one of many forms of religious participation, and non-attendance was no evidence of alienation from the Christian religion. In the Protestant state churches of Europe generally, many baptized and confirmed adults regarded themselves as members in good standing despite infrequent attendance at Sunday services. The mass was a mandatory means of grace among the relatively small Roman Catholic community in Great Britain, but for most Protestants Sunday worship was the outward and visible sign of one’s inner religious state and outward moral condition. Many habitual neglecters of Sunday practice, especially those with money and influence, regarded themselves as supporters of the established church. At the same time, not all public worship was strictly voluntary, especially among school children, and those required to attend services at military chapels, college chapels, or workhouse and orphanage services. Family churchgoing caught up an unknown number of attenders who, were it not for family custom or expectation, would have chosen to sleep in on Sunday. On the whole, though, the census enumerators were right that Sunday attendance, at least for adults, involved a high degree of voluntary choice, one that was active rather than passive, and could certainly not be dismissed as compulsory. The census organizers had conceded the practical triumph of voluntarism.

The census identified 35 distinct religious bodies, and that was an underestimate that failed to take into account individual congregations with no denominational affiliation, and groups assembling in private homes. Less persuasive, perhaps, than the assumption that churchgoing was voluntary was the assumption that there was a certain unity of motivation across the diversity of religious practice to be found among the enumerated religious communities. What did attendance at Evensong in Durham Cathedral have in common with attendance at a Bible Christian chapel in Devon? Historians have struggled to find a common label for the characteristics of the revival of religious institutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, often settling on some variant of the word ‘evangelical’. The 1851 census,

though, reflects a common effort to Christianize or re-Christianize Britain that cannot be contained within one theological category. Although religious practice was heavily marked by divisions based on class, ethnicity, gender, region, and theology, amidst this diversity, for almost everyone involved in the religious enterprise, Sunday church attendance was a marker of concern for the moral health of society.

The inheritance of Christendom was very much alive for the Victorians, although it operated under a new set of legal and informal rules. Britain's established churches sustained a parochial system, with rites of passage almost universal among those who were not self-consciously affiliated with the Nonconformist or Roman Catholic denominations. Officials of the established churches – bishops, priests, moderators, ministers, and elders – exerted broad influence while regretting that their authority could no longer be taken for granted, competing with other denominations that were taking advantage of religious toleration, grasping for ways to hold on to the privileges and finances inherited from the age of Christendom. The result was a hybrid form of Christianity – part confessional, part voluntary.

John Stuart Mill described the Victorian age as one 'in which real belief in any religious doctrine is feeble and precarious, but the opinion of its necessity for moral and social purposes almost universal' (Mill 1989: 71). Mill's primitive view of the social nature of religion led to a misunderstanding of the relationship between religious and social ideas, which are always intertwined to a greater or lesser degree. Individuals may recognize the social functions of religious faith and practice without in any way compromising their beliefs. Mill did identify a common theme in the revival of religion: the conviction that the building of Christian institutions would be beneficial to British society. If taking the children to chapel might not produce a New Jerusalem, it would almost certainly make Huddersfield a better place to live. Fear of hell remained an active force: in many evangelical families, parents waited anxiously for evidence of the workings of grace in the hearts of their children. It is notable, though, how much more prevalent than the fear of hell was the fear of social, moral, and family breakdown, a more visible and present danger than the uncertain reality of eternal torment.

It is here that we find a common motive for the immense amount of voluntary effort that went into the building of religious institutions. It was a conviction that religion and religious institutions were good for the individual, and good for society. The director of the census, Horace Mann, made this connection:

The history of men and states shows nothing more conspicuously than this – that in proportion as a pure and practical religion is acknowledged and pursued are individuals materially prosperous and nations orderly and free. It is thus that religion has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.
(Census of Great Britain 1851 1852–53: cxviii)

Contrary to Mill, Mann recognized that religious views are inseparable from views about how to live in this life as well as one's eternal fate.

At the intersection of religious practice and the general health of society came the family. It was family churchgoing that filled the churches, and behind the public display of concern for society was anxiety about the state of Britain's children. The fact that Christian faith and practice could no longer be taken for granted drove anxiety about a downward slope into irreligion and immorality, and that very

anxiety drove the upward slope of church and chapel building. More than anything else, the goal of religious institution building was to produce a new generation that was more Christian than the last. It was recognized that young people who became independent of family often fell away from regular church attendance, especially if they moved to a city, and it was hoped that when they settled down with their own families they would resume the practice of Sunday attendance, and pay attention to the religious socialization of their own children.

For the established neo-confessional churches, there was the familiar method of the catechism and preparation for confirmation. Evangelical families in particular also saw the growth of family prayers, often including servants as well as children, and there were informal methods, not well documented, for parents to communicate to their children directly or indirectly their own beliefs in the centrality of religious faith. There was resistance to this new familial piety in some upper-class circles. At Holland House in the 1840s, as reported in Greville's memoirs: 'Everybody knew that the House was skeptical, none of them ever thought of going to church, and they went on as if there was no such thing as religion' (Greville 1938: v, 87). It is very difficult to quantify the growth of religious 'seriousness' in households, but many observers, including Mann himself, commented on the perception that more and more families, especially middle and upper-middle-class families, were taking religion seriously at home as well as in church or chapel. Other things being equal, when parents communicate to their children the central importance of religion in their own lives, children are more likely to adopt a religious point of view when adults.

As Sunday attenders expressed their voluntary assent to a campaign to make the next generation of Britons more Christian, other motives drove the growth of religious institutions. Churchgoing served as a visible sign of a commitment to respectability (for lack of a better word), a social marker that ran across social classes. It was well understood by the 1850s that levels of churchgoing were markedly higher in wealthy and middle-class urban neighbourhoods. In some working-class and poor neighbourhoods Sunday church attendance was low by any standard. The markings of class have led to confusion about the nature of Victorian religion. In the first place, low Sunday church attendance did not mean that working-class families were entirely detached from the churches, nor that Sunday worship was entirely middle class. In parish after parish, and chapel after chapel, the majority of worshippers were wage earners, shopkeepers, or artisans. In many working-class neighbourhoods it was women – especially but not exclusively mothers – who maintained the family link with the church, by sending children to Sunday school, taking advantage of the ubiquitous network of religious philanthropy, having their children baptized, and attending church when they could.

The world of Anglican worship was divided sharply along theological and church party lines. Anglican religious entrepreneurs – lay and clerical – were determined to re-establish, on a voluntary basis if necessary but with public funds when possible, the old confessional ideal of a gentleman in every parish, a clergyman whose very presence would provide a healthy social influence on the neighbourhood. The theological and liturgical divisions between evangelical, old high church, and Tractarian churchmen were enormously important to the hardcore of ecclesiastical activists. High church Tractarians believed, for instance, that a colourful

style of worship – with paintings, statues, bells, and incense – would be particularly attractive to urban working-class worshippers. There is little evidence, though, that liturgical or theological differences mattered very much in the choice of an Anglican parish, although it did produce very distinctive experiences of public worship.

What did matter was, for lack of a better word, entrepreneurship. Did the local parish church offer attractive, lively, well-attended services, with a broad range of philanthropic institutions and recreational associations? Was the clergyman active and aggressive in seeking out connections with the people of his parish? Anglican activists of all church parties were up against a deeply rooted sense of the role of the clergy as essentially passive. The church must provide its ministry, but when it came to seeking people out actively – recruitment – there was a take it or leave it mentality. As late as 1837, Bishop Samuel Butler told one curate that ‘if the inhabitants will not take the trouble to come . . . far to hear your sermons, and much more the beautiful prayers of our Liturgy . . . I am sure they do not deserve to have them brought to their doors’ (Soloway 1969: 341). It was in that very year that the high church theologian Walter Farquhar Hook began his 22 years of institution building in Leeds. Taking charge of a parish church with only 50 communicants, he raised funds (public and private) for a new parish church that seated 4,000 people, doubled the number of Anglican churches, and expanded the number of Church of England schools from three to 30.

Anglicans like Hook, who worked hard to build new parish churches, conducted worship in a way that was both attractive and dignified, and attempted to bring religion to the people, found success in the Victorian age. There was a constituency for their services, among people at higher levels of society who believed that the state churches were instruments of moral good, and among a range of churchgoers who regarded the churches as a means of maintaining family solidarity and social respectability. There was a very strong strain of social conservatism in Anglican social teaching, one that identified morality with respect for the hierarchies of class and patriarchy, and in particular deference to the clergy. From a family that attended both Nonconformist and Anglican worship, Thomas Hardy remembered all of his life the humiliation he felt when sitting in church in 1856 along with his mother, and hearing the clergyman preach against the presumption shown by those who seek to rise in the social hierarchy (Millgate 1982: 55). Most Anglican churchgoers were interested in something less ambitious and more important than upward mobility: respectability. They were not merely attempting to separate themselves from their less respectable neighbours, but to identify with families of all social classes who struggled to live sober, righteous, and godly lives, and to see that their children did the same.

The motives for Anglican and Nonconformist churchgoing overlapped in many ways. Respectability was as important to Nonconformists as to Anglican churchgoers, although for many Nonconformists it was detached from deference to social superiors. It consisted instead of independence from them. The Nonconformist denominations – mostly some form of Methodist, Congregationalist, or Baptist – were growing rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century, and roughly half of the churchgoing population in March of 1851 attended a Nonconformist chapel. At mid century Nonconformist membership reached something of a peak in terms of percentage of the total population, although the census demonstrated a broad

penumbra of Nonconformist influence beyond their enrolled members (Gilbert 1976). What was behind the upward slope of the bell-shaped curve of Nonconformist membership growth?

When one entered a Nonconformist chapel one entered a different world from the local parish church. In the first place, the forms of worship were far more intelligible to a stranger than the Anglican liturgy, in which what was expected of a worshipper – i.e. when to stand, when to speak, when to sing, and when to kneel – varied across parishes depending on the views of the incumbent clergyman and parochial tradition. In a Baptist, Methodist, or Congregationalist chapel, worship – though influenced by Anglican liturgy – had been modified to provide a predictable path through scripture readings and hymns to the sermon, with the pulpit normally holding pride of place in a chapel designed as an auditorium. Chapels with higher social standing conformed more closely to the Anglican liturgy as the century progressed, and many Methodist chapels had never abandoned it, but even the more liturgically inclined chapels attempted to be as open and welcoming as possible.

The style of worship provides a clue to the social origins of Nonconformity as a religion of the people rather than a religion for the people. Nonconformists had a church of their own. Baptist and Congregationalist chapels were among the most democratic institutions of Victorian Britain, governing their own affairs and hiring and firing their own ministers. The several Methodist denominations had more top-down forms of ecclesiastical government, run by the ministers, but Methodist ministers knew that ultimately their salaries were paid by their hearers. The most autocratic of the Methodist denominations, the Wesleyan Conference founded by John Wesley, had suffered severe schisms over issues of democratic control, leading to the founding of dissident Methodist denominations, including the largely working-class Primitive Methodists that included women as well as men among their ministers in the early nineteenth century. Even among the relatively autocratic Wesleyans, a chapelgoer was far more likely to hear a Sunday sermon from one of the thousands of lay preachers – 19,826 of them at the end of the century – rather than one of the 2,454 full-time ministers (*The Encyclopedia Britannica. Eleventh Edition* 1910: xviii, 294).

Just as much has been made of the autocratic nature of Methodist ecclesiastical leadership, a great deal has been made of the upper-middle-class and bourgeois leadership of the three principal denominations: Baptist, Congregationalist, and Wesleyan Methodist (Thorne 1999; Hall 2002; Twells 2009). The large Nonconformist preaching centres found in the northern and midlands cities and in London, and the new denominational structures being constructed for Congregationalists and Baptists, served as vehicles of class assertion for newly wealthy families, industrialists, merchants, investors, professionals, and journalists. Alongside the wealthy lay supporters of Nonconformist chapel building was a new class of educated ministers, who regarded their own status as equally good as that of the Anglican clergy, a claim utterly rejected by the clergy, whose contempt for Nonconformists helped to reinforce a common sense of Nonconformist identity.

It would be a misunderstanding of Nonconformity as a whole, though, to summarize it as form of bourgeois class assertion. Nonconformist chapels were widely distributed throughout England and Wales, and provided the institutional

setting for one of the most important of all forms of Victorian social identity, the distinction between church and chapel. In the overwhelming majority of Nonconformist chapels, members and attenders were artisans, shopkeepers, and wage earners who might, or might not, defer to the social influence of wealthy denominational leaders in the large cities, or might defer to it for some purposes and not others (Everitt 1972; Gilbert 1976; Howkins 1985). Plebeian Nonconformists shared with Anglican churchgoers a belief in the social utility of religion for purposes of family solidarity and promoting moral values among the general population. They also shared a commitment to the public display of respectability. What distinguished Nonconformists of all social classes was a sense that they had a church of their own. The Primitive Methodists of East Anglia who formed the backbone of early agricultural trade unionism had no interest in deferring to the bourgeois leadership of industrialists in the Congregational and Unitarian chapels of Birmingham. Their chapels were theirs, not under the control or leadership of someone else. Nonconformist ministers, excluded from a university education, had a sense of identity with their congregations that was missing among the Anglican clergy. It was only among the wealthy urban chapels that ministers had received a full education at one of the many ministerial training schools, and many of the lesser ministers supplemented meager incomes with other work during the week.

Educated and wealthy Nonconformists did take the lead in asserting Nonconformist social identity, taking a newly aggressive tone in the mid-nineteenth century that was dismissed by its critics as ‘political Nonconformity’. The most visible and outspoken advocate of assertive Nonconformity was Edward Miall, a Congregationalist minister in Leicester (and later member of parliament). In 1841 he raised funds to support a new newspaper, *The Nonconformist*, and moved to London to be its editor. That journal’s masthead slogan, ‘The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion’, inspired Matthew Arnold to launch his dismissive and snobbish critique of the culture of Nonconformity in *Culture and Anarchy*. Miall never persuaded Nonconformists generally to support his aggressive political agenda, and antagonized many prominent Nonconformists. Even Nonconformists who were not prepared to join him, though, were willing to participate in public forms of Nonconformist self-assertion, and shared his resentment at the social exclusion that Nonconformists suffered, which often appeared to be all the more galling for being relatively mild. In order to understand the worlds of Victorian religion, it is essential to acknowledge the church/chapel social divide that sprawled across class and geography in Victorian England, from small villages right up to the House of Commons (Bebbington 1982; Wald 1983).

In Wales this social divide worked itself out in a different way. Welsh Nonconformity, as chapels ‘of the people’ whether Welsh or English speaking, became vehicles for Welsh identity. English Roman Catholics, serving a very different constituency, also became aggressive in raising funds and building new churches after the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850. Roman Catholicism was far more important than its numbers would indicate (about 2 per cent of churchgoers in 1851) because of the deeply entrenched suspicion that Roman Catholics were not reliable subjects of the British Crown, a view reinforced by the strong conviction of the church that Protestants were not Christians. Their

English leadership was supplemented with an infusion of highly publicized conversions from the Church of England, the most famous being John Henry Newman, but the most important for building up the church was Henry Manning, Archbishop of Westminster for 26 years from 1865. It was among Irish immigrants to Great Britain, and their children and grandchildren, that English (and Scottish) Catholic leaders found their constituency. The old view that the distinctive, insular, Ultramontane piety of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English and Scottish Roman Catholicism was the result of imported forms of Irish piety has been overturned by recent scholarship (Heimann 1995). English Catholic ecclesiastical entrepreneurs promoted Ultramontane piety among Irish Catholic immigrants and their children. The combination of religious supply and religious demand produced steady Catholic church growth in Britain well into the mid-twentieth century.

The historic Nonconformist denominations of England could be found in Scotland too, along with some small and distinctively Presbyterian seceding denominations, but Nonconformity never found a large constituency there. The Church of Scotland was hardly a democratic ‘church of the people’, but it had never been associated with landowning and elitist privilege to quite the same extent as the Church of England. There was no English equivalent of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, whose annual debates drew widespread attention. At the parish level Scottish ministers were at least thought to be providing something resembling public education on a much broader basis than the hit or miss provision of Anglican parishes. When the Church of Scotland broke in two in the Disruption of 1843, the issues were very different from those that created the church/chapel divide in England. Led by the greatest of all nineteenth-century ecclesiastical entrepreneurs, Thomas Chalmers, the Disruption was formally about issues of governance and elite control, but in practice about how to mobilize Christian churches in a mass campaign to regenerate society (Brown 1982; Hilton 1988). Chalmers’s famous experiment with parochial regeneration in a working-class parish in Glasgow was based on the hopes that government funds would pour into the parishes of the established Church of Scotland. What was new in this experiment was Chalmers’s conviction that even the poorest parishioners could be mobilized to support a campaign of ecclesiastical expansion that would regenerate society with its attractive worship, day schools, Sunday schools, and parochial philanthropies. Chalmers’s work, although evangelical in theology, became a model for Scottish church extension that resembled W. F. Hook’s work in Leeds. The ecclesiastical entrepreneurs who followed Chalmers found the bureaucratic structures, and ‘cold’ theology, of the Church of Scotland intolerable barriers to their plans for church extension. That 470 Church of Scotland ministers were willing to contemplate a schism in an established church that most of them loved for all its faults, and form a new Free Church of Scotland, was testimony to the urgency with which they regarded their task.

The word ‘philanthropy’ hardly does justice to the scale of Victorian ecclesiastical social work among the poor and needy, work that was suffused with religious connotations and conducted with worship and song. The religious impulse to help the poor and regenerate society poured into many voluntary societies that were organized on a national or city-wide basis, but until the very late nineteenth century,

most of them worked through local churches or chapels, which provided an intersection for national and local interests. In his (now neglected) masterpiece, *Fathers of the Victorians*, Ford K. Brown documented the growth of what he called 'evangelical' philanthropy in the early nineteenth century, counting up more than 200 newly organized national or regional or urban philanthropies founded between the 1790s and the 1840s, each of them an independent voluntary organization (Brown 1961).

At the local level, the most important institution was the ladies' district visiting society, in which wives and daughters divided up urban parishes into districts in order to visit regularly every poor family, encouraging the baptism of children and school attendance, and attempting to see that those children had coal, medicine, and boots. Anglicans and Nonconformists alike built mission halls in poor neighborhoods, and their work was supplemented by entirely new home missions and denominations such as the London City Mission and the Salvation Army. It is impossible to quantify the scale of religious philanthropy, but the array of philanthropic and parochial work was similar across denomination boundaries, and one parish, St John the Divine in Kennington, South London, will serve as an example. In the late nineteenth century it supported 25 district visitors, 150 Sunday school visitors, 170 other volunteer workers, one paid and one voluntary bell ringer, two lay readers, one paid nurse, and eight voluntary members of an Anglican sisterhood; 1,500 were enrolled in Sunday school, and 500 adults in various philanthropic clubs that included a burial guild, a day nursery, a penny savings bank, a benefit society, a sanitary committee, a men's institute, and a registry office for servants (Cox 1982: 42). Amidst the welter of national societies, parochial relief agencies, and mission halls one can find a profound sense of good will and moral seriousness that lay at the heart of the world of Victorian religion, and which provided among other things an alternative approach to 'the poor', to the harsh, repellent utilitarian ethics that lay behind the Victorian poor law.

By mid century, Sunday schools were as ubiquitous as religious philanthropy, and the 1851 census identified 302,000 voluntary Sunday school teachers. The Sunday school movement had its own national organization, but it was implemented locally, often as a kind of semi-autonomous auxiliary of the church or chapel. The movement took root first among Nonconformists and in industrial districts, and was a favourite charity of employers, including those who employed child labour. By the late nineteenth century the state churches were catching up, and there were urban areas with extremely sparse Sunday worship attendance, which had virtually universal Sunday school attendance (Green 1996). If Sunday school served the purposes of utilitarian social control, it was also a great convenience for working-class parents, an opportunity to get the children out of the house for a while on Sunday. Numbers enrolled, a smaller number than those who attended at some point or another, grew among all the major denominations until the end of the century, when the Church of England enrolled 2.5 million, the Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland 400,000 between them, the Wesleyan Methodists alone over a million, and the English Baptists and Congregationalists between them over 1.4 million (Currie, Gilbert and Horsley 1977: 167–92).

While we know a good deal about the social geography and institutional structure of Sunday schools, we know less about what actually happened in a Sunday school class. Sunday school classes were most successful when preparing for a pageant, or putting together banners for one of the Whitsuntide Sunday school public processions that were popular in Lancashire and other parts of the North of England. Parents like to see their children on display. Inside Sunday school classes, children were taught bible stories, missionary stories, and hymns. The level of biblical literacy imparted could not have been very sophisticated, but it was, from a Christian activist point of view, better than nothing. The education acts of 1870, 1902, and 1944 each, in different ways, represented a tightening up of requirements that the young be taught elements of the Christian religion by trained teachers (although exactly which of those elements should be taught was a subject of ferocious political conflict, especially in the 1906 general election). The growth of state-funded, compulsory Christian teaching represented a kind of passing of the baton from the relatively ineffective denominational schools to professional state schools. It is plausible to believe that the Sunday schools, and later state supported schools with religious education, inculcated a level of religious literacy in the general population that was higher in the early twentieth century than at any time in British history.

Sunday scholars also learned to sing. What they actually sang is difficult to find out. There is a large body of scholarship on Christian hymnody, focusing on the history of lyrics and to a lesser extent tunes, but no social history of song that tells us what hymns meant to congregations. That congregational singing was becoming more and more important is evident from the time and effort put into organizing parochial orchestras and congregational choirs, the large amounts of money devoted to organs (often over vociferous objections from churchgoers themselves), and the riot of contemporary musical publications. Publishers discovered that they could make money selling hymn books, some of them little more than pamphlets, to churches and Sunday schools, and found new markets in Scotland as Presbyterian bodies (amidst great controversy) expanded the use of hymns and attempted to improve the traditional Calvinist psalmody, which however edifying had never been lively. What is evident from their output is the heterogeneity of hymn singing. There was no musical equivalent of the Book of Common Prayer. The beautiful hymns of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley had broad, cross-denominational appeal, but even in those cases it is hard to identify the tunes, which to worshippers were even more important than the words in determining what was a 'favourite'.

Musical chaos led to attempts to standardize singing in order to raise musical tastes, especially by Anglicans, and the publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861 was the most influential of several attempts to impose some austerity on the democratic idiom of do-it-yourself hymn composition. It never became universal even among Anglicans, where it encountered theological objections especially from old High Church and new ritualistic circles. The advocates of restraint in hymnody received another major setback with the publication in 1873 of Ira D. Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*, and the popularization of exuberant tunes to accompany them in the mass evangelistic rallies conducted by Sankey and Dwight L. Moody in the late nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, evangelists who succeeded in attracting groups of presumably unchurched working men to

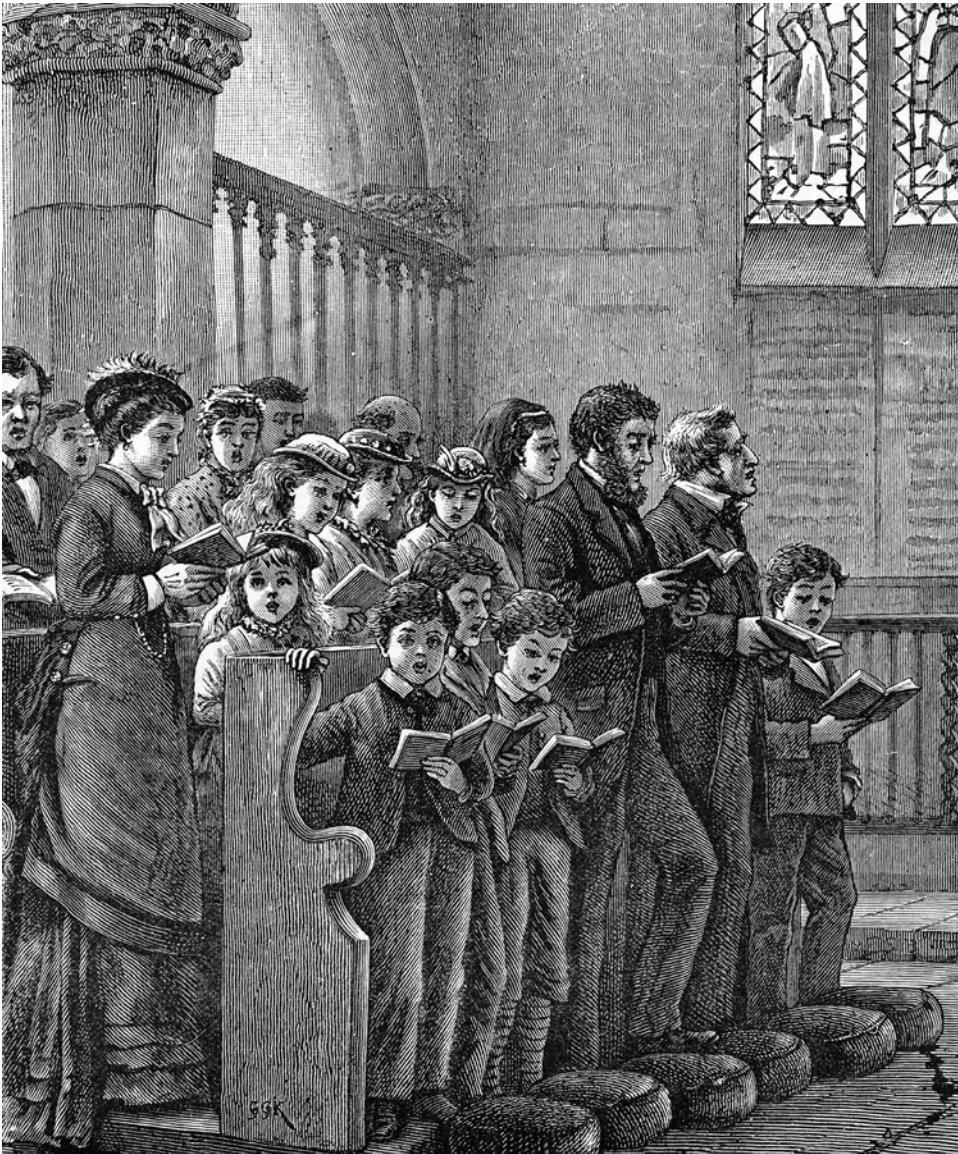


Figure 24.1 Congregational Singing, 1881. Mary Evans Picture Library

special services, often found that they could count on the crowd to sing a Sankey tune. Further attempts to raise standards of hymnody culminated in the publication of *The English Hymnal* in 1906. In a famous preface to the edition with tunes, Ralph Vaughan Williams condemned virtually the entire body of Victorian hymnody, including the most popular hymns from *Ancient and Modern*, as unsuitable for worship, and the tunes themselves as positively harmful to those who sang them (Dearmer 1906).

The popularity of these hymns is further evidence of the great success of the Victorian churches in finding ways to attract people. In Wales hymn singing became an element of national identity. Hymns were the most widely practiced form of popular music in the nineteenth century, and as hymn tunes gradually began to be published along with the lyrics, and as more adults and children participated in parochial and congregational choirs, and learned to sing in Sunday school, the effect on elementary musical literacy must have been as great as the effects of Sunday school on elementary biblical literacy.

Sunday worship, religious philanthropy, Sunday schools, and church choirs hardly exhausted the options available to Victorian Christians. Also at hand was one of the largest projects of all of the Victorian churches, foreign missions. Organized foreign missionary societies proliferated in the nineteenth century as mission activists, after decades of controversy, persuaded most churchgoers that what was good for Britain was good for the world. Like philanthropy and Sunday schools, the national organizations intersected with, and were rooted in, parishes and chapels. It would be difficult to find a parish or chapel of any size that did not have a local missionary society of some kind by the late nineteenth century, and large parishes would have several, catering to the special interests of different parishioners, i.e. missions to railway workers in South Africa, women in the Middle East, or fallen Eurasian women in the Diocese of Lahore. The largest and most successful missionary societies were the Church Missionary Society (evangelical Anglican), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (old High Church Anglican), the (mostly Congregationalist) London Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Although relatively new, these societies found themselves regarded as old, established, and bureaucratic by mid century. They found themselves in competition for funds and recruits with missionary entrepreneurs as smaller denominations founded new societies, and independent missionary activists started 'faith missions' such as the China Inland Mission, which claimed to depend directly on the spirit for its funding, bypassing the entrenched bureaucratic fundraising methods of the mainstream denominational societies. By the early twentieth century over 100 missionary societies competed for funds and personnel.

Churches and chapels were the sites of fundraising for the national mission societies, and the distribution of the flood of missionary literature generated by those societies was intended to maintain the flow of money and volunteers. Each of the major societies produced several periodicals – including special journals directed to women, such as *Our Indian Sisters* (Baptist Zenana Missionary Society), and to children, such as *The Little Soldier* (Salvation Army).

The missionary societies saw a steady growth in contributions and recruits throughout the nineteenth century, and should be seen squarely in the context of church growth in general. Their periodicals were supplemented with a flood of special ephemeral material for use in Sunday schools, including cut-out dolls of the costumes of children in foreign lands, materials for missionary pageants, and small collection boxes, often in imaginative shapes. Children could make regular if tiny contributions at home to the large (often elephant-shaped) bank sitting in the hall, a way of persuading them that they could participate in making the world a better place.

What did the millions of Sunday Scholars learn about the world from missionary literature? First they learned that missionaries were heroes. Churches and missionary societies created an entirely new profession in the first half of the nineteenth century, in which missionaries went from being the ‘little detachments of maniacs’ condemned by Sydney Smith to heroic social reformers exemplified by David Livingstone. In this, as in many other matters, missionary literature was thoroughly misleading. The typical missionary was not a roving evangelist in a pith helmet preaching the gospel under a palm tree, or a social reformer calling in the resources of the Royal Navy to suppress the slave trade. For one thing, the majority of missionaries were women, assuming you count missionary wives as missionaries, which they were. Furthermore, missionaries resembled heroic explorers less than they resembled the local men and women who were building Christian institutions in the local neighbourhood. That is what missionaries did, everywhere, even when they were sent out by faith missions such as the China Inland Mission, which claimed to renounce the strategy of institution building.

The appeal of an opportunity to devote one’s life to doing some good in the world drove missionary recruitment throughout the nineteenth century, providing among other things opportunities for social advancement for the artisans and shopkeepers who constituted the backbone of Nonconformity, and for young women of all denominations, who could aspire by mid-century to be a missionary wife, and by the end of the century to be an independent missionary. It is difficult to estimate the precise number of missionaries, since the missionary societies failed to count women in the mid-nineteenth century, but by 1890 there were over 4,000 missionaries serving overseas at any given time, 54 per cent of them women. That number continued to grow, doubling by the 1930s, the peak decade for British overseas missionaries (Cox 2008: 263–71).

There were contradictory strains in the missionary enterprise, especially over issues of race and imperial power, and over the discordant impulse to defame foreign cultures on the one hand and humanize them on the other. Building institutions in Lahore or Durban created a set of dilemmas that institution builders in Glasgow and Leeds did not face. To a surprising degree, scholarship on missionaries still treats them as straightforward cultural imperialists who were attempting to colonize the hearts and minds of non-Western people in the interests of Western culture. Thoughtful Victorian missionaries were very much aware of this critique, and attempted to deal with it with a set of slogans popularized especially by the mid-Victorian missionary theorist Henry Venn. Missionaries, he argued, should commit themselves to creating non-Western Christian institutions that were ‘self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending’, with the ultimate goal being ‘the euthanasia of the mission’. As missionaries built institutions overseas, though, they created highly visible hierarchies of white privilege. By the late 1880s the roughly 4,000 British Protestant missionaries abroad employed over 22,000 paid staff, many of whom were more than willing to point out the contradictions between Christian egalitarianism and missionary privilege. Modern scholars might sneer at the ‘multi-racial commonwealth of missionary fantasy’ (Comaroff 1991: I, 32), but this aspiration was taken very seriously by missionaries and non-Western Christians alike, and the world of missions was, with some exceptions, a bastion of resistance to the spread of scientific racism in the late nineteenth century.

Because so much missionary literature for home consumption was directed to Sunday schools, children in foreign cultures were often humanized so that British children would recognize that children in foreign places were ‘just like us’. However, foreign children had the misfortune to live in a culture that lacked the benefits of centuries of Christian civilization. At that point the defamatory triumphed in missionary literature, especially in the early and mid-nineteenth century. In order to justify going overseas at all, in a country where there was great suspicion even in Christian circles of the propriety of missions, early nineteenth-century missionary rhetoricians chose the most exotic and often repulsive characteristics of a foreign culture, using cannibalism, sati, the seclusion of women, and footbinding as a form of synecdoche. These depictions have had a remarkable staying power, in part because of fascination with the exotic, in part because they converged with broader liberal humanitarian currents in the West. In the late nineteenth century there was a marked waning of defamation in missionary literature, but it is still difficult to avoid the conclusion that the main impact of Sunday school teaching about ‘the other’ was to promote a kind of humanitarian ethnocentrism, a belief that non-Western peoples, however much they have in common with us, need our help.

Two recent influential books, Callum Brown’s *The Death of Christian Britain* and Hugh McLeod’s *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, identify the crucial decade for the decline of Christianity in Britain as the 1960s (Brown 2001; McLeod 2007). Others (myself included) date the decline of Christianity from the 1880s and 1890s, when the growth of Christian institution building began to level off and, at some point, decline in importance (Cox 1982; Green 1996; Williams 1999). It has not been the purpose of this chapter to discuss and analyze the downward slope of the graph, but to examine the reasons why Christianity was becoming more, not less, important in the Victorian age. Small but growing numbers of Victorians became involved in alternatives to Christianity – rationalism, humanism, agnosticism, spiritualism, theosophy – and it is likely that the number of families where the religious problem was regarded as solved, as something that belonged to the past, was growing. However influential the agnostics, their numbers remained small, and intellectual historians over the last decades have documented the ways in which field after field of scholarly inquiry was dominated by questions that were framed in religious terms, whether it be anthropology, philosophy, natural history, or even mathematics (Wheeler-Barclay 2010; Den Otter 1996; Desmond and Moore 1991; Cohen 2007). Victorian Christianity was important because of its vast institutional presence, which existed only because enough Victorians had good reasons to believe Christian institutions were important.

At some point in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, religious institutions outgrew the constituencies they were built to serve. Victorian church builders constructed churches that were far larger than any reasonable person could hope to see filled. Nonconformists became integrated into English society, ceasing to feel the sense of exclusion that drove Nonconformist social identity. They had fewer children per family, and often communicated to them that it was important for them to make up their own minds in matters of religion, which many of them did. Broad anxieties about domestic social disorder eased in the early twentieth century, and specialized social welfare institutions, and various government bodies, moved in to assume responsibilities that had been ecclesiastical. As church growth

stalled, educated people interpreted that decline as a resumption of the normal downward slope of religion in the modern world. Others believed, and many still believe, that Darwin had killed off religion. If one consulted the early twentieth-century *Encyclopedia Britannica* on matters of religion, one would find T. H. Huxley, surveying a century of religious growth, and ignoring the new age of faith all around him, declaring: ‘That this Christianity is doomed to fall is, to my mind, beyond a doubt; but its fall will neither be sudden nor speedy’ (*The Encyclopedia Britannica. Eleventh Edition* 1910: XIV, 20b).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE CREED OF SCIENCE AND ITS CRITICS



Bernard Lightman

In his defence of Charles Darwin after the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859), T. H. Huxley argued that the theory of evolution by natural selection had to be judged by scientific standards alone. Religious bigotry could play no role in a rigorous evaluation of the theory's validity. Huxley compared Darwin to Galileo, and others like him, who had suffered at the hands of over-zealous Christians. 'Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth', Huxley declared, 'from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters?' (Huxley 1898: 52). As Darwin's bulldog, Huxley insisted that the pursuit of truth demanded openness to new ideas. Huxley was just as critical of unbelievers who, in his eyes, impeded the quest for scientific truth. Though attracted to Auguste Comte's stress on adopting a scientific approach to social problems, Huxley condemned the elaborate set of dogmas that formed the articles of the Religion of Humanity. He once remarked, famously, that 'Comte's philosophy, in practice might be compendiously described as Catholicism minus Christianity' (Huxley 1870: 140). To Huxley, Positivism was more a repressive pseudo-religion than a strictly scientific body of knowledge.

An eminent biologist, Huxley was one of the leaders of a remarkable group of liberal intellectuals who championed evolutionary theory and scientific naturalism. But despite their passionate defense of intellectual freedom throughout the debates over Darwin's theory of evolution, their opponents began to complain in the 1870s that they had become rigid and dogmatic. This criticism of scientific naturalism gathered momentum in the 1880s. By 1888 Lewis Wright, poultry, pigeon, and animal expert, could argue in an article 'The New Dogmatism' that he had every right to refer to 'the materialistic system of Evolution' as a new 'creed'. 'It explicitly claims to be sufficient for all the concerns and conduct of human life', Wright pointed out. 'Such a system amounts to a Creed', he declared. Moreover the 'New Dogmatism' made its 'extensive claims' far too aggressively given the slender scientific evidence currently available (Wright 1888: 193).

The credal characteristics of the system of belief held by Huxley and his friends, though grounded on science, have not escaped the notice of previous scholars.

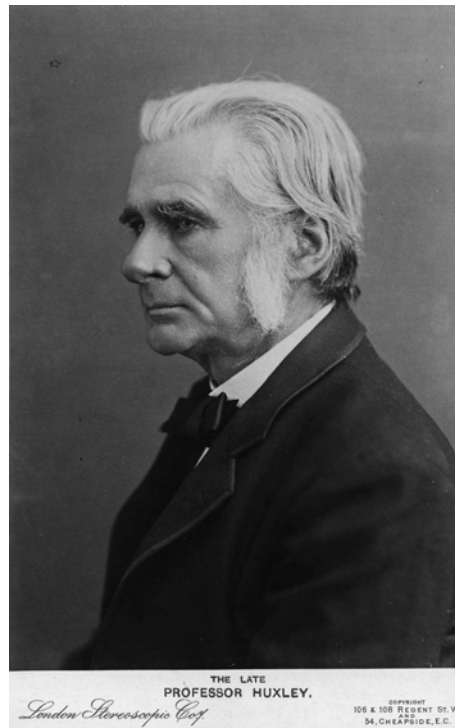


Figure 25.1 Thomas Henry Huxley by London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Roy MacLeod has discussed how its detractors contributed to a sustained attack from 1880 to 1895 that was part of the revolt against positivism (MacLeod 2000: 2–4). But MacLeod dealt primarily with critics who charged that science was morally and intellectually bankrupt. Here I will discuss opponents, like Wright, who cleverly turned the tables on the scientific naturalists by depicting them as the dogmatists. By challenging the Darwinians’ claim to be the defenders of intellectual freedom, such criticisms exposed the dark underbelly of scientific success. Huxley and his allies had been outsiders to the establishment when they first arrived on the scene in the early 1850s. They pushed their way into the charmed circle of power by developing a new system of beliefs based on evolutionary science designed to replace the old Christian creed that they detested. By the 1870s, their strategy for obtaining power had paid off: they *were* the scientific establishment. Their opponents alleged that the power had corrupted them. They had become even more arrogant and close-minded than the hierarchies they had previously attacked. Drawing attention to this set of critics in particular brings into focus the contest over the cultural identity of science in the Victorian world. For the issue underlying the controversy over the creed of scientific naturalism boiled down to the question: who had the right to speak with authority about the ultimate significance of modern science?

THE CREED OF SCIENTIFIC NATURALISM

Before the scientific naturalists arrived on the scene in the early 1850s, gentlemen of science such as the polymath William Whewell, the astronomer John Herschel, and the geologist William Buckland dominated British science. Anglican intellectuals educated at Oxford or Cambridge, they believed that science involved the study of a world designed by an omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent creator. Since science was seen as an adjunct to Christian theology there was no possibility of conceiving of an independent creed of science. Although Benthamite Utilitarians and radical working-class evolutionists championed a secular vision of science, their views had little traction in the first half of the century. The immense success of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London in 1851, revealed the growing fascination of Victorians with science. They flocked to coastal beaches to search for specimens and combed rural Britain for ferns. Science became fashionable. But the fascination could go far deeper than just a socially acceptable way of spending one's leisure time. For some, science was seen as the best method for determining truth, and for supplying the basis of a new worldview appropriate for a modern, urban, and industrialized society. Science was no longer viewed as a mere adjunct to Christian theology. In her autobiography, Beatrice Webb, a disciple of Herbert Spencer who later married the leading Fabian socialist, recalled the 'cult of science' that had inspired many mid Victorians. One of its key tenets was 'the current belief in the scientific method . . . by means of which alone all mundane problems were to be solved' (Webb [1950]: 112). Increasingly, in the second half of the century, the intellectual legitimacy of all ideas had to be determined through the use of the scientific method. This is why historians have often referred to the period from 1850 to 1890 as an age of the 'worship of science' or the 'cult of science'.

The rising prestige of science during the middle of the century opened up opportunities for previously marginalized groups. Whoever could claim to speak on behalf of science gained immense cultural authority. They could assert that they alone understood the broader cultural significance of scientific ideas. Huxley and his fellow scientific naturalists took full advantage of the situation. Though they had originally come from outside of the Oxbridge establishment, they laid claim to speak authoritatively on behalf of science. Their attempt to secularize nature was opposed by other members of the scientific elite who defended the older concept of a religious framework for science. This included both those who were part of the Oxford–Cambridge tradition, men such as the geologist Adam Sedgwick, as well as the North British Physicists.

Relative newcomers to the scientific scene like the scientific naturalists, Glasgow professor of natural philosophy William Thomson, Scottish natural philosophers James Clerk Maxwell and Peter Guthrie Tait, and the engineers Fleeming Jenkin and Macquorn Rankine formed a 'North British' group. The founders of energy physics in the early 1850s, these men bore the impress of Scottish Presbyterianism, represented Whig and progressive values, and were linked to the industrialists of northern Britain. They viewed the scientific naturalists as anti-Christian materialists and they were willing to enter into an alliance with English Anglicans to curtail the influence of Huxley and his allies (Smith 1998). Both the North British Physicists

and the scientists centered at Oxford and Cambridge engaged the scientific naturalists in numerous controversies over their claims to speak authoritatively about the cultural significance of modern scientific theories. But critics from outside the scientific elite also attacked the scientific naturalists, many of them objecting to the ethical basis of their creed. In his article on the creed of science and its critics, MacLeod demonstrates that the sources of the debate over the moral bankruptcy of science can be traced to the theological and philosophical opposition of the 1870s to the interpreters of Darwinism, intensified by the claims of naturalism in art, literature, and philosophy (MacLeod 2000: 4).

The term 'Scientific Naturalism' was first used by Huxley in 1892 in the prologue to his *Controverted Questions*. Huxley wanted to confer on it a long and distinguished intellectual pedigree, stretching back to the Renaissance. 'It is important to note', he wrote, 'that the principle of the scientific Naturalism of the latter half of the nineteenth century, in which the intellectual movement of the Renaissance has culminated, and which was first clearly formulated by Descartes, leads not to the denial of the existence of any Supernature; but simply to the denial of the validity of the evidence adduced in favour of this, or that, extant form of Supernaturalism' (Huxley 1909: 38-39). But scientific naturalism was not simply the rejection of supernaturalism.

Historians have tried to pin down the meaning of this rather complex term. Frank Turner has argued that the scientific naturalists, in addition to permitting no recourse to causes not present in empirically observed nature, also presented a cosmology based on three major mid-century scientific theories, the atomic theory of matter, the conservation of energy, and evolution (Turner 1974: 9-35). Rather than referring to scientific naturalism as a cosmology, MacLeod treated it more as a creed that contained five articles. First, scientific naturalists believed that scientific knowledge was the norm of truth; second, they stressed unity and continuity instead of discontinuity or randomness; third, they held that the universe was dynamic; fourth, they professed adherence to the Cartesian dualism between mind and matter; and fifth, they were convinced that the natural world could be described within a Newtonian world of causal relationships, discoverable through mathematics (MacLeod 2000: 4-5).

The scientific naturalists could be divided into two groups. First, there were the scientists, including Huxley, the physicist John Tyndall, philosopher of evolution Herbert Spencer, anthropologist John Lubbock, mathematicians William Spottiswoode and Thomas Archer Hirst, botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker, chemist Edward Frankland, and zoologist and paleontologist George Busk. All of these men were members of the X-Club. Founded in 1864, the X-Club was a private, informal society where the members could exchange ideas on literature, politics, and science over dinner. For 20 years the members of the club met once a month from October to June. The X-Club wielded tremendous power in the scientific world (Barton 1980; Barton 1998; MacLeod 1970; Jensen 1971-72). The formation of the club allowed the members to pursue a number of common objectives, the foremost among them to turn science into a professional, meritocratic, publicly respected and state-endowed activity. Though not members of the X-Club, other scientists shared many of their aims, including the biologist E. Ray Lankester, the mathematician William Kingdon Clifford, the founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, the

anthropologist Edward Tylor, the doctor Henry Maudsley, and the statistician Karl Pearson. Perhaps even Darwin should also be added to the list. In addition to the large number of scientists who were aligned with scientific naturalism, a second group contributed to its power. Though intellectuals of various sorts, and not scientific practitioners, they were important for disseminating the principles of scientific naturalism to the broader public in books and periodicals. Among them were the positivist Frederic Harrison, and a group of journalists, editors, and writers such as Leslie Stephen, G. H. Lewes, John Morley, Grant Allen, and Edward Clodd. These two groups represent the double thrust of scientific naturalism. Scientific naturalists were engaged in reforming both science and Victorian society at large.

Though they were a somewhat amorphous group, the scientific naturalists shared one crucial notion: their beliefs had to be presented as part of a system similar to the Christian creed, but confirmed by current science. Herbert Spencer's ten-volume *System of Synthetic Philosophy* (1860–96), which included volumes on biology, sociology, ethics, psychology, and religion, is a case in point. Highly regarded among scientific naturalists, Spencer aimed for a new synthesis of all knowledge. All phenomena were interpreted in a systematic fashion according to the law of evolution. Even Huxley, who believed that erecting an entire evolutionary system was premature, looked to science to provide an order to modern thought. The three scientific doctrines responsible for progress 'are intimately connected', he insisted, 'and each is applicable to the whole physical cosmos' (Huxley 1901: 66).

But an intellectual system of beliefs was not enough for the scientific naturalists. They aimed at something more elevated and unconventional. The two customary meanings of creed don't quite fit what the scientific naturalists had in mind. Their creed was not intended to imitate the concise, formal statement of the essential articles of Christian belief; nor was it merely a system of purely secular principles. The scientific naturalists believed that their creed contained a profoundly religious quality, even though the majority of them subscribed to a form of agnosticism. To Tyndall, religion 'is engrained in the nature of man' (Tyndall 1898b: 29). 'No atheistic reasoning can', he affirmed, 'dislodge religion from the human heart' (Tyndall 1898a: vol. 2, 205). Huxley, who coined the term agnosticism in 1869, also believed that religion, rightly conceived as belonging to the realm of feeling, was an important dimension of human life. 'Religion', he declared, 'has her unshakeable throne in those deeps of man's nature which lie around and below the intellect, but not in it' ([Huxley] 1864: 821). There could be no conflict between science and religion, since they belonged to two distinct realms ([Huxley] 1859: 35). Conflict only arose when theology was confused with religion ([Huxley] 1864: 821; Lightman 1987: 131–32).

Spencer and his followers went much further than Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford in exploring the religious dimensions of scientific naturalism. Spencer's *First Principles* (1862), the first volume of his grand evolutionary system, affirms the existence of divine being, which he refers to as the 'Unknowable', that provides the basis of reconciliation between science and religion (Lightman 1987: 81–86). In the 1880s, a group of disaffected secularists, including Charles Albert Watts, Richard Bithell, and Samuel Laing, began to define themselves as Spencerian agnostics (Lightman 1989). Bithell, for example, wrote a book titled *Creed of a Modern Agnostic* (1883), where he systematically laid out a series of propositions

about the manifestations of the unknowable. In his *Agnostic Problems* (1887) Bithell announced that ‘we not only can worship the Unknowable, . . . it is the only proper object of supreme worship’ (Bithell 1887: 122). In his journal *The Agnostic*, Watts publicized a proposal to establish an Agnostic temple in south-western London (Anon. 1885: 48).

The insistence by scientific naturalists that their set of beliefs included a religious dimension may seem inconsistent with their assault on the power of the Christian church. But they had good reason to depict their creed as a religious one. It distanced them from lower class atheists and materialists, and provided them with the respectability they needed to be taken seriously as members of the intellectual elite. This was especially important since many of the scientific naturalists were outsiders. Born to a humble lower-middle-class Anglican family, Huxley received his training at a medical academy in London. The high-profile Nonconformists who lectured there opened his eyes to how Anglican privilege operated in the world of science. Without an education at Anglican Oxford or Cambridge, his prospects for obtaining a paying job in science had initially seemed slim. The German-trained physicist Tyndall, professor of natural philosophy at the Royal Institution, and the philosopher of evolution, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), shared Huxley’s lower middle-class roots. Like Huxley, they had been educated outside the privileged Anglican institutions of Oxford and Cambridge. Some allies were men whose Anglicanism had been demolished by a tumultuous crisis of faith, such as William Kingdon Clifford (1845–79), professor of applied mathematics at University College, who rebelled against his High Church upbringing while at Cambridge in the late 1860s.

In addition to enhancing an outsider’s claims to respectability, a scientific creed could also be offered as an alternative to the traditional creeds. Huxley argued that scientific progress not only conferred material benefits to humanity, it also had led to intellectual and religious improvement. ‘I say that natural knowledge’, Huxley wrote, ‘seeking to satisfy natural wants, has found the ideas which can alone still spiritual cravings’ (Huxley 1901: 31). Those considering the rejection of the Christian creed had nothing to fear. The creed of scientific naturalism offered spiritual fulfillment. Although Darwin had never formally constructed a ‘gospel’, Allen believed that it was possible to find one hidden in his work. ‘There must inevitably be a gospel according to Darwin’, he contended, ‘lying perdu somewhere for the attentive eye among his biological collections and inductions’. Darwin’s doctrine of natural selection had thrust God, for the time being, into the background. But evolutionary theory offered new insights into human existence that could replace many of the key beliefs in the old gospel. Darwinism substituted the rise of man for the Christian dogma of the fall of man, and it replaced the notion of a lost paradise in the dim past with a realizable paradise in the nearer future. Though modern biology did not sanction the popular notion of a life after death, it brought with it ‘a genuine increase in our sense of man’s dignity, and the perfectibility of his nature here on our existing sublunary planet’ (Allen 1888a; Allen 1888b).

Even the way that scientific naturalists pictured the way to search for scientific truth mirrored Christian notions of self-abnegation. The scientific naturalists held

to an epistemological ideal of self-sacrifice, or self-annihilation, in order to reach a position of objectivity from which to locate truth or describe reality. Tyndall wrote: ‘a self-renunciation that has something lofty in it, and of which the world never hears, is often enacted in the private experience of the true votary of science’. Surrendering oneself to nature was ‘the first mark of a true philosopher’ (Tyndall 1898a: vol. 1, 291). The epistemology of scientific naturalism required that the individual begin by putting aside conventional religion as an authority in the quest for knowledge, and it demanded a willingness to suffer the consequences of finding out the unpleasant truth that the world was not made for humanity (Levine 2002: 12, 15).

In sum, creating a new creed was indispensable to the efforts of the scientific naturalists in presenting themselves as the cultural elite best equipped to guide Britain as it was being transformed into a modern, industrialized nation. It retained all the advantages of the Anglican creed it was designed to replace; yet it was fully in keeping with the most current science. Since the new creed was constructed by the scientific naturalists to wrest cultural and social control from the Anglican-aristocratic establishment, it was tied closely to the English context. This explains why scientific naturalism was largely an English affair. Though there were some scientific naturalists in the United States, for example, such as Spencerian disciples John Fiske and Edward Youmans, an American school did not exist. But as a strategy for contesting the authority of the Anglican clergy in Britain, the development of a creed for scientific naturalism was an unequivocal success. Huxley and his allies were able to launch their attacks on the Anglican establishment throughout the 1860s without suffering too much from charges of heterodoxy. Their efforts to obtain a fair hearing for Darwin’s evolutionary views, apart from theological considerations, were realized. Not only were they accepted into the scientific elite, by 1870 they controlled many of the important institutions of science. Huxley presided over the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Tyndall was the director of the Royal Institution and Hooker was the Director of Kew Gardens.

WILLIAM GRAHAM AND HIS CREED OF SCIENCE

In 1870 Richard Holt Hutton, theologian, journalist, man of letters, and editor of the *Spectator*, playfully anointed Huxley pope. Hutton pointed out that Huxley had recently been inconsistent in hastily rejecting an ethnological theory with which he disagreed. Whereas Huxley had in the past been ‘opposed to the assumption of a tone of premature certainty’, in this case Huxley was adopting ‘the tone of a Papal bull, – containing violent censures . . . as well as dogmatic decrees’. Hutton charged that Huxley did not recognize within himself a tendency towards dogmatism that on occasion led him to adopt a rigid position when he engaged in controversy. Hutton objected to the entire tone of Huxley’s response. The sarcasm that Huxley wielded with such power was undignified. May we not ask, Hutton cried, ‘whether his tone in controversy should not be one of a certain diffidence and of respect for the opinions and judgments of others, even when they are least in accordance with his own?’ ([Hutton] 1870: 135–6). Hutton’s criticism brilliantly

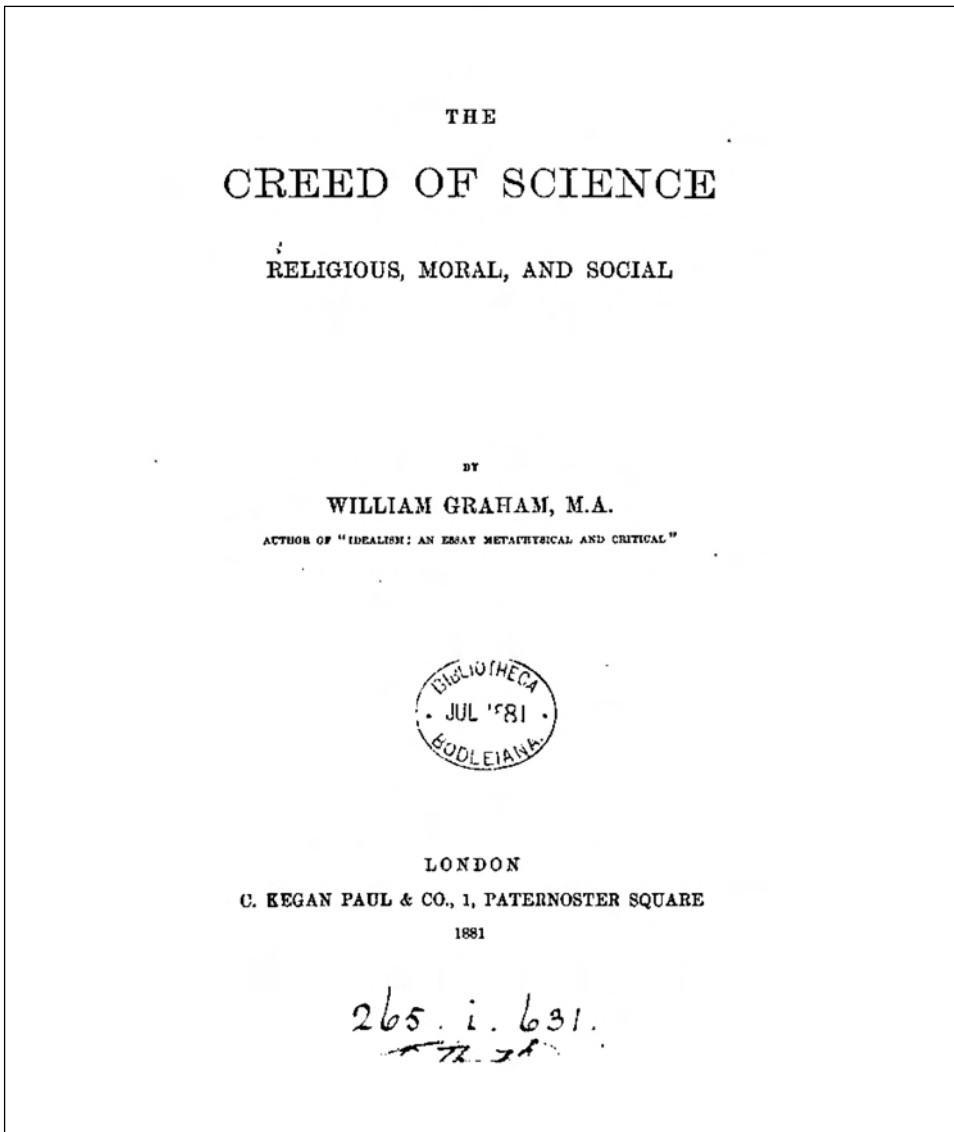


Figure 25.2 Title Page of William Graham's *The Creed of Science*
(© Kegan Paul, 1881)

turned the tables on Huxley, the master ironist. As James Paradis has shown, Huxley used his gifts as a satirist on many occasions to turn the direction of the irony against Christian orthodoxy and to 'seize the moral high ground for a progressive intellectual culture associated with the sciences'. Huxley's satire was intended to demonstrate that scientific naturalism was more flexible than the established, static belief system of conventional religion (Paradis 1997: 164–65, 171). But by calling him 'Pope Huxley', Hutton had demonstrated that Huxley's

openness was a sham. Hutton was one of the earliest critics of scientific naturalism to point to the dogmatic quality of its creed. That creed had helped scientific naturalists to become leading members of the scientific establishment. But throughout the 1870s others, besides Hutton, began to notice that once in power the scientific naturalists behaved no differently from those that they had displaced. William Allingham and W. H. Mallock contended that their creed could be condemned for its rigidity. In 1881 William Graham presented the most forceful and comprehensive evaluation of the creed of scientific naturalism.

In September of 1877 William Allingham, a poet and editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, sketched out the 'Creed of the Future' for which Tyndall, Huxley, and Clifford would be responsible. It would include the ideas that humans are basically animals; that only matter existed; that there are neither souls nor heaven; that there were no moral obligations; and that there was no trace of a divine being. Though Allingham recalled how in his youth the theologian had been 'the chief object of my intellectual and moral animosity', he condemned the 'Modern Prophets' for assuming 'in turn the arrogance of those who they subdue'. Lately science had shown 'a tendency to overbear and tyrannise in the domain of Human Thought' ([Allingham] 1877: 273, 275–76, 292). William Hurrell Mallock echoed Allingham's protest against the dogmatism of scientific naturalism that same month in the *Nineteenth Century*. A conservative political and religious polemicist educated at Oxford, Mallock wrote fiction and contributed frequently to the periodical press. He was perhaps best known for his satirical novel *The New Republic* (1877), which included parodies of eminent Victorian figures such as Arnold, Pater, Jowett, Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford. In his 'Is Life Worth Living?' Mallock argued that modern atheists escaped condemnation because their creed was supposedly based on science. They claimed that nature is their teacher. But 'they, too, have their church, their infallible teacher', Mallock avowed, 'to whom they profess an implicit and devout obedience'. Mallock was particularly critical of the 'whole gospel of atheistic ethics', based on 'heroic self-abnegation'. Although the atheistic moralists had professed to have 'de-religionised' life, religion is 'lurking everywhere', even in the notion of heroic self-abnegation (Mallock 1877: 254–55, 262, 272–73).

But the most comprehensive evaluation of the creed of scientific naturalism was offered in William Graham's *Creed of Science*. Philosopher and political economist, Graham was lecturer in mathematics at St Bartholomew's Hospital when the book was published. In 1882 he was elected to the chair of jurisprudence and political economy in Queen's College, Belfast. In the introduction to his book Graham proposed to outline 'the general creed of Science' and 'to offer some comments and criticisms on some of its more doubtful articles, with a view to their reconsideration or revision'. Graham acknowledged that eminent scientists like Huxley, Clifford, and Tyndall had already 'set forth the scientific faith' in their essays, addresses, and books. Although Graham was willing on most occasions to defer to the scientists if they had reached a consensus on a particular scientific theory, he questioned whether or not they had the same authority when it came to religious, moral, social, or philosophical issues. He was prepared to criticize the acknowledged authorities when some of the articles of the creed of science turned out to be based on 'inferences without scientific justification'. Extensive scientific expertise was not needed to distinguish between a mere hypothesis and a fact (Graham 1881:

xi, xvi). Whereas scientific naturalists tended to emphasize the need for expertise in order to dismiss the interventions of those without formal scientific training, Graham believed that the debate should be open to any educated individual.

Graham argued that legitimate doubts could be entertained on the Darwinian hypothesis. He did not believe that it was as ‘well-founded as the Newtonian theory of Gravitation’. Graham was even more skeptical when a scientific hypothesis like natural selection was converted, almost surreptitiously, into a universal philosophical theory (Graham 1881: xix, xx). What Graham objected to most in the building of a creed upon Darwinian evolution – and this is the main theme running throughout the entire book – was the chance element it contained. He exclaimed that ‘the fatal defect in Darwinism, and in all the more or less systematic presentments that have lately been given of the whole doctrine of Evolution, whether by Spencer, Haeckel, Huxley, or Strauss, is the denial, express or by implication, of all and any purpose or Final Cause in the universe’. Graham was unwilling to abandon all belief in a purpose in nature. He looked to the notion of the divine guidance of evolution as an effectual check to the materialism of Huxley and Tyndall (Graham 1881: 47, 50, 345, 360).

Graham was not recommending a total rejection of the creed of science. He looked to science as ‘the true revelation to men – the only revelation that men have ever received or can receive’. Like Huxley, he believed that ‘science will bring not only material but spiritual comforts and alleviation’. But he distinguished between the creed of science and that of scientific naturalism. ‘It is our right and our duty to challenge the conclusions of Science, or rather of the current philosophies which profess to speak in her name and with her credit’, he affirmed, ‘when they affect to be authoritative and final deliverances on philosophic or religious questions of supreme import. On the question of a future life, and of the existence and nature of God we cannot allow the decisions of scientific specialists or even of scientific philosophers to contain the whole truth and the final word’ (Graham 1881: xxi, 227, 229). To Graham, the creation of a creed of science could not be entrusted to the scientific naturalists, as their expertise in their respective fields had not prevented them from foisting illegitimate materialistic concepts onto their beliefs.

Graham’s book was read widely enough to require a second, revised edition in 1884. His readers ranged from one end of the intellectual spectrum to the other. William E. Gladstone, well known for his conservative religious ideals, was stimulated by Graham’s book to write a series of memoranda outlining the main elements of his engagement with science. He was critical of the inflated claims of Darwinists to have the scientific authority to erect a creed-like system independent of Christianity. On 5 December 1881, Gladstone thanked Graham for sending him a copy of *Creed of Science*, and declared himself a determined rebel against the dogmatism of science (Bebbington 2004: 235–36). The elderly Darwin was one of Graham’s readers. In a letter dated 3 July 1881, Darwin thanked Graham ‘for the pleasure which I have derived from reading your admirably written “Creed of Science,”’ and he noted that it had been a long time ‘since any other book has interested me so much’. Although Darwin could not agree that the ‘existence of so-called natural laws implies purpose’, he believed that Graham had vividly and clearly expressed his ‘inward conviction’ that ‘the Universe is not the result of chance’. But then,

Darwin wrote, ‘the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy’ (Darwin 1881). Graham replied the following month. He did not believe that evolution threw any suspicion on the power of the human reasoning faculties (Graham 1881).

During the 1870s the success of scientific naturalism led opponents to portray its proponents as part of a rigid establishment. By depicting the scientific naturalists as holding to their creed dogmatically, Hutton, Allingham, and Mallock all mocked their inconsistency. Huxley and his allies refused to allow their ideas to be open to criticism, the very charge they had levelled against the Anglican establishment during the 1860s. Graham’s *Creed of Science* was the first in-depth analysis of the issue. Though Graham was far more sympathetic towards the scientific naturalists than Hutton, Allingham, or Mallock, even he had grave reservations about the legitimacy of their creed. Challenging the authority of the scientific naturalists outside of science per se, he offered an alternative creed that retained the idea of a divinely guided evolutionary process. Graham’s book focused attention on the problematic aspects of the creed that had served the scientific naturalists so well in earlier decades. That opened the door for even more critics during the rest of the 1880s to expose the inconsistencies in their creed.

CONSPIRING AGAINST THE SCIENTIFIC NATURALISTS

Several years before Graham’s *Creed of Science* was published, the novelist and popularizer of science Samuel Butler complained in his *Evolution, Old and New* (1879) that Tyndall had referred to the theory of evolution as if it were ‘one and inseparable from Mr. Darwin’s theory’. Butler himself had offered a theory of evolution that was not based on Darwin’s hypothesis of natural selection. To Butler, Tyndall’s pronouncement was ‘in the true vein of the professional and orthodox scientist; of that new orthodoxy which is clamouring for endowment, and which would step into the Pope’s shoes to-morrow, if we would only let it’ (Butler 1924: 317). In a similar vein, in 1880 he wrote to his sister that he did not trust Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Allen, or Lankester. Like the ‘Roman priesthood in less tolerant times’ they disregarded ‘their own first principles’. Three years later in another letter he told her that ‘it is not the bishops and archbishops I am afraid of; men like Huxley and Tyndal are my natural enemies’ (Howard 1962: 85, 104). Though Butler had at one time been a member of the Darwin circle, after questioning the validity of the theory of natural selection in the late 1870s he was ostracized by the Darwinians. Butler began to think of himself as being ‘in a conspiracy of one against men of science in general’ (Jones 1919: vol. 1, 417). He became one of the most vociferous opponents of scientific naturalism in the late Victorian period (Lightman 2007).

But Butler was by no means a voice crying in the wilderness. Over the years, numerous adversaries confronted the scientific naturalists. Other members of the scientific elite challenged the dominance of the scientific naturalists, including the North British Physicists, as well as the gentlemen of science who were still active in this period, including the anatomist Richard Owen. Many of the self-educated

popularizers of science, including John George Wood, were keen to perpetuate the natural theology tradition. British intellectual and religious leaders were also opposed to scientific naturalism. This would include representatives of the old aristocratic–Anglican establishment, such as Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, and distinguished Tory politician A. J. Balfour. They were joined by leading Catholics, including John Henry Newman, and prominent Nonconformists, including Congregationalist minister Robert William Dale, and Robert Flint, a philosopher and theologian in the Church of Scotland. Idealists, among them Thomas Henry Green, and spiritualists, including Oliver Lodge, and literary figures, for example John Ruskin, were also among those who challenged the scientific worldview championed by the scientific naturalists. Frances Power Cobbe, like other feminists and antivivisectionists, clashed with scientific naturalists over their views on women and animal experimentation. Socialist intellectuals, including Henry Mayers Hyndman, dismissed Darwin and Huxley as pro-capitalist due to their emphasis on competition in the evolutionary process. The scientific naturalists were challenged on virtually every aspect of their creed, whether it involved their views on ethics, aesthetics, society, politics, education, or religion. But after Graham's *Creed of Science*, one of the most powerful themes sounded by critics was how scientific naturalists resembled defenders of dogmatic Christianity.

During the 1880s the enemies of scientific naturalism were quick to point out the similarities between the man of science and the man of the cloth. The novelist Louise de la Ramée, writing under her *nom de plume* 'Ouida', referred disparagingly to the 'high priests of modern science'. She castigated the 'bigotry of science, which has so much and so grievously in common with the bigotry of the religious' ([de la Ramée] 1886: 140, 152). George Douglas Campbell, politician, scientist, and the eighth Duke of Argyll, ridiculed Huxley for talking about "intellectual sins" quite in the language and spirit of the Vatican' (Argyll 1887b: 772). Like the Christian clergyman of old, when the church was powerful, the man of science had become arrogant and dogmatic. In her *Scientific Spirit of the Age* (1888), Frances Power Cobbe condemned the 'arrogant' and 'overbearing' attitude of the man of science who thought it 'fit to rebuke a theologian for trespassing on his ground after he has been trampling all over the ground of theology' (Cobbe 1888: 28).

The dogmatic scientist demanded submission from the scientific layman. If the teachings of science dictated that a sacrifice had to be made, Cobbe believed that 'thousands of worthy people' would 'bow their heads, as pious men of old did at the message of a prophet. "It is Science! Let it do what seemeth it good"' (Cobbe 1888: 4). Argyll agreed that modern science required a terrible intellectual submission to its prophets. He cried: 'it was high time indeed that some revolt should be raised against that Reign of Terror which had come to be established in the scientific world under the abuse of a great name' (Argyll 1887a: 339). As an example of the 'Reign of Terror' in science, Argyll pointed to the 'wide-spread reluctance to question any theory advanced by Charles Darwin' (Argyll 1888: 246). He was particularly concerned about Darwin's theory on the origin of coral reefs, which had recently been disputed by John Murray, one of the naturalists on the *Challenger* expedition. But Murray's well-supported theory had been met with a 'conspiracy of silence'. The upshot, Argyll cautioned, was that men kept silent or they were prevented from thinking on the subject (Argyll 1887c).

Just as scientific naturalism mimicked Christianity in the dogmatism of its leaders, and by demanding submission from its followers, Ouida argued that it was as corrupt as the medieval Papacy. Since, according to the scientists, knowledge was inherently valuable, ‘all ways and methods of obtaining it are justified and sanctified’, Ouida declared. This bore ‘so curious a likeness to the self-worship of the Papal dominion and of the Spanish Inquisition that we see, with a sense of despair, that bigotry and despotism in some form or another are fated to reappear as long as human life shall last’. The result was nothing less than ‘political immorality’. By conferring ultimate value on knowledge, the scientists became ‘willing to admire and support any government which is willing in return to endow their scholarships and erect their laboratories, . . . build them a number of new colleges, with every new instrument ready to their hands for animal torture and physiological or chemical experiment’ ([de la Ramée] 1886: 151). Ouida later expanded her attack on medical scientists in a book titled *The New Priesthood* (1893). She emphasized the parallels between the scientist and the inquisitor – both used their concern for the welfare of mankind as a pretext to satisfy their lust for torture. ‘It is amazing’, she wrote, ‘that the extraordinary exactitude of likenesses between the religious and the scientific fanatic has not before now struck some observant critic of these modern times’ (de la Ramée 1893: 4–5).

Dogmatic, tyrannical, and corrupt, scientific naturalists also proselytized for a deeply flawed creed. Direct criticisms of their creed followed two lines of approach. Some opponents argued that it really wasn’t a religious creed at all. The editor of the *Month*, for example, began his 1882 article on ‘The Prevalent Phase of Unbelief’ by asking: ‘What is the creed of the agnostic?’ He answered that agnosticism was ‘but atheism in disguise’. This implied that their so-called creed contained no religious content, and that they pretended that it did in order to distance themselves from the ‘ill-sounding name’ of atheism (Editor 1882: 158, 167). Others took a different tack. They followed Graham in pointing out that the creed of scientific naturalism went beyond the scientific evidence. In his attack on ‘The New Dogmatism’, Wright charged that Clodd and Allen went beyond ‘the legitimate inferences from well-ascertained facts’ when they erected organic evolution into an all-embracing cosmic philosophy. Wright concluded that Clodd and Allen presented no credible scientific evidence for their creed (Wright 1888: 194, 201, 204). Scientific naturalism was based on articles of faith like any other organized religion.

After demonstrating the dogmatic, corrupt, anti-religious, and unscientific nature of scientific naturalism, a final trump card could be played. It involved questioning the authority of the most influential scientific naturalists on issues that were outside their area of expertise. Here too the critics took their cue from Graham. The Duke of Argyll observed that Huxley slyly used the term ‘science’ to include metaphysics and philosophy. ‘Under cover of this wide sweep of his net’, Argyll pointed out, ‘he assumes to speak with the special authority of a scientific expert upon questions respecting which no such authority exists either in him or in anyone else’. It was ‘on the strength of this assumption’ that Huxley ‘designates as pseudo-science any opinion, or teaching, or belief, different from his own’. However Argyll claimed to know ‘a good many scientific men of the very highest standing who totally dissent from Professor Huxley’s metaphysics and philosophy; and are by no means inclined

to accept his expositions, even of physical science, when those expositions travel beyond the particular branch in which he is an original observer'. It was easy to be 'intimidated by authorities in "science"', Argyll contended, 'when in reality no sort of authority exists' (Argyll 1887b: 771–72).

Treating scientific naturalism as a creed that mirrored elements of the Christian creed opened up new opportunities for shaking the authority of Huxley and his allies. It allowed critics to portray scientific naturalism as a modern equivalent to the medieval Catholic Church – dogmatic, tyrannical, and corrupt. Identifying scientific naturalism with Catholicism tapped into the hatred and fear of popery that lay deep within the English, Protestant psyche. The claims of scientific naturalism to represent a liberal and open worldview could be exposed and ridiculed. Questions could be raised about the scientific credibility of its creed, and about the authority of its leaders to speak on issues outside of their very narrowly prescribed realm of specialized expertise. In sum, the shortcomings of their creed proved that they had no special insight into the workings of the universe that gave them the right to pontificate on religious, metaphysical, ethical, political, social, aesthetic, or philosophical issues. Critics who took advantage of this rhetorical strategy were not just conservative defenders of Christianity, like Mallock and the Duke of Argyll. Depicting scientific naturalism as dogmatic was also attractive to anti-vivisectionists, such as Cobbe and Ouida, and to Samuel Butler, an evolutionist, who had little sympathy for the Anglican establishment.

CONCLUSION: REPUDIATING THE CREED

In 1888 Samuel Laing, railway chairman, official of the Board of Trade, and three times a Member of Parliament for the Liberals (1852, 1868, 1873), wrote an article summarizing 'The Agnostic's Creed' at the request of William E. Gladstone (Laing 1888: 13). During the 1880s Laing had been espousing agnosticism in a series of books, including his popular *Modern Science and Modern Thought* (1885). Laing's compilation of a list of eight articles of the agnostic creed, one of which affirmed the existence of an inscrutable First Cause, drew from Huxley one of his most important articles, 'Agnosticism' (1889). Huxley's article is in part an attack on Spencerian disciples like Laing and a means of defending himself from orthodox Christians such as Henry Wace. It is also his response to the criticisms of the creed of scientific naturalism that had appeared since the publication of Graham's *Creed of Science* earlier in the decade. Huxley wrote that agnosticism 'has been furnished with a set of "articles" fewer, but not less rigid, and certainly not less consistent than the thirty-nine', and he dismissed Laing's article on the grounds that agnosticism was a method, not a creed. Huxley declared that if anyone had asked him to compile a list of the articles of agnosticism, 'I should have replied that, if he referred to agnostics, they have no creed; and, by the nature of the case, cannot have any' (Huxley 1909: 209, 245). In the 1860s providing a religious gloss to scientific naturalism had helped to win converts and rebut the charges of atheism and materialism. But by 1889 Huxley had realized that associating scientific naturalism with the idea of a creed of science had become a liability. It opened the door to drawing damaging comparisons between the set of beliefs put forward by scientific naturalists and the creed held by dogmatic Christians. It also raised awkward

questions about the ability of scientists to speak with authority on issues beyond the scientific domain.

But Huxley's enemies were not about to let him off the hook so easily. Responding to Huxley's article 'Agnosticism', Mallock argued that Huxley was being evasive in claiming that agnosticism was merely a method. The agnostic method, like all methods, had results, and those results amounted to a creed (Mallock 1889: 534). Mallock believed that Huxley, and other agnostics, were cowards for not having the courage to admit that they had a creed, and that it required the denial of God and morality (Mallock 1889: 540, 553). The critique of the creed of scientific naturalism became part of the 'revolt against positivism' growing in strength in the 1890s. It marked the end of the age of 'the cult of science'. The mechanistic and naturalistic analysis of nature was subjected to attack by eminent thinkers from around the Western world, including the American William James, Henri Bergson and Henri Poincaré of France, the German Edmund Husserl, and James Ward of England (Turner 1974: 228). In his essay 'The Will to Believe' (1896), William James rejected Clifford's contention that Christians were immoral for believing in their creed without sufficient evidence. Clifford and his ilk believed 'so completely in an anti-Christian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start'. It was the scientific naturalists who believed in an unsubstantiated creed. 'When left to their instincts', James declared, the greatest empiricists 'dogmatize like infallible popes' (James 1948: 97). In other words, there was little that was scientific about the creed of scientific naturalism.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE POWER OF THE PAST

History and modernity in the Victorian world



Billie Melman

In the last year of Victoria's reign, Natsume Kinnosuke, a young Japanese scholar sent to London for an advanced study of English, paid visits to the Tower of London and the Carlyle Museum. His imaginative appropriation of Victorian historians (not least Carlyle himself), English historical novelists and cartoonists, of continental historical painters and of British national historical monuments, is manifest in the two eponymous short stories, published in Tokyo in 1905, when Kinnosuke already became known as Natsume Soseki and began his career as Meiji Japan's major author and one of Japan's greatest writers. The stories juxtapose different images of the past and their relationship to modernity. 'The Tower of London' projects an image of Britain's iconic historical monument as 'a distillation of the history of England' that mocks the ephemeral character of the present and defies technological progress (Soseki 2005: 92). Carlyle's house is represented as an enclosed hermitage, preserving the life of the dead Victorian historian-prophet. However the small-scale history of the domestic and private, self-consciously pitted against the grand scale of the story on the Tower, does not cut the past from the speed and noise emanating from the modern city and the present (Soseki 2005: 121–29). Both stories astutely circulate a variety of Victorian historical texts and images of material remains of the past. Both demonstrate the transnational and colonial resonance of Victorian preoccupation with the past, and both capture the different configurations of the inescapability from the past in the Victorian city, its ubiquity and the power it exercised in a Victorian world, perceived by Soseki as a world of unstoppable change.

During the last two decades or so, this ubiquity and the pivotal role of the past in Victorian culture, society and politics have been charted in an expanding historiography, across disciplines. Intellectual historians and historians of science (Burrow 1981; Collini 1991; Bentley 2005; Van Riper 1993; Secord 2000; Bowler 1989), cultural historians (Mandler 1997a, 1997b, 2002; Melman 2006, 2011a), archaeologists and historians of philology (Dalley *et al.* 1998), students of Victorian literature, drama, the arts and design (Bann 1984; Mitchell 2000; Bohrer 2003), museologists and ethno-musicologists (Bennett 1995; Hughes and Stradling 1993), have all probed the unprecedented exposure of the Victorians to knowledge about

the past. Recent research has revealed the growing accessibility of history and its diffusion across classes and genders, and in different locales; the staggering extent of the commodification of the past, and the variety of uses that individuals and groups made of it in politics, in social lives, and in their imaginary (Bann 2012; Baxendale 2008; Melman 2011a; Melman 2012). This project of recovery has made us alert to the multiplicity and diversity of the meanings the past held for individuals and groups in the Victorian world. It has now become a truism that the age that was fixated on progress was obsessed not just with ‘a past’ or ‘a history’, but with ‘multiple pasts’, ‘multiple histories’ and ‘multiple antiquities’ (Klaniczay and Warner 2011), and that it constantly singled out, for various purposes and uses, different periods that preceded it and interpreted them variously (Collini 1999: 9–11).

Notwithstanding the current research’s emphasis on multiplicity, quite a few historians maintain that the plurality of narratives and interpretations of the past was contained within and subordinated to a hegemonic and dominant Victorian master narrative, embodied in the Whig interpretation that envisaged history as a purposive progress. This narrative, as John Burrow has noted, was confident and stressed continuity between the past and the present (Burrow 1981). The continuous process had a meaning that unfolded in the progress of individual freedom as well as the freedom of the economy and national political institutions. As Burrow, Peter J. Bowler and Michael Bentley have made clear, progressionist views of the past and its relation to the present varied, but a notion of onward progress and its adjacent belief that history had a direction, from the past to the future via an ameliorative present, predominated in Victorians’ senses of their own and other peoples’ pasts (Burrow 1981; Bowler 1989; Bentley 2005).

This chapter seeks to address anew the conundrum that has been implicit in quite a few of the studies cited above: how and why the Victorians, who witnessed unprecedented material development and expansion and struggled to come to terms with and make sense of change, were so preoccupied with the past. The relationship between accelerated change in the material world and transitions in the sense of temporality was often registered by the Victorians themselves and had been acknowledged by their immediate predecessors. John Stuart Mill’s comment in 1831 in ‘The Spirit of the Age’ that ‘times are pregnant with change’ and ‘... the nineteenth century will be known to posterity as the era of one of the greatest evolutions of which history has preserved the remembrance in the human mind, and in the whole constitution of human society’ easily comes to mind (Mill 1831: 228–29). Material transitions preceded the Victorian era: by 1851 the First Industrial Revolution came to its end and mechanized production had been implemented alongside new forms of labour and the organization of time. Rapid and unprecedented urbanization was also well on its way before 1837. To be sure, swift material and ecological changes, indeed materiality itself, have been marked out as immanent and generic to early industrial capitalism everywhere (Berman 1982; Morley 2009). But in Britain the decades after 1837 represent not merely escalation in the pace of already established material changes and in the awareness of them, but substantive transformation in both, as well as in what Boyd Hilton has described as individuals’ and groups’ sense of the limits to development and human growth itself (Hilton 1988). The chapter thus is about the relationship

between history and its uses on the one hand and a particular form of modernity that I have characterized elsewhere as ‘mixed modernity’ (Melman 2011a). Mixed modernity was at its most manifest in Britain’s changing urban environment where unprecedented growth and development were inextricable from destruction, and continuities in forms of governance, religious beliefs, and traditional forms of leisure persisted alongside changes in modes of production, democratization, the application of modern technologies and rationalization. Changes were part of transitions that were imperial and global. Victorian historical culture resonated with the complexities of mixed modernity. The new forms of knowledge about the past, which developed in new disciplines and sciences, new methods and practices for the investigation of history, and new modes of representation – notably new historical–literary genres and spectacles – did not replace older forms, but were added to them. The template of the Victorian sense of temporality and obsession with the past is diffusion and expansion by accretion, that is: the addition of new forms and new knowledge to older ones, not their substitution.

Diffusion marks out four dimensions of the culture of history that the chapter examines. The first is the dramatic growth of the accessibility of the past to groups that previously had been largely excluded from it. This change, quite noticeable from the early 1840s, extended not only to mixed urban audiences of both genders and of all classes, but also to groups and cultures outside Britain, in the empire and in other imperial cultures, as the example of Soseki has demonstrated. Second, and related to diffusion and democratization, is the transnational character of the mass-production of images of the past. A third dimension is the change in the sense of temporality, most apparent in an expansion of the definition of the past and of history. New knowledge about the past expanded its scope in both chronological terms and geographically and pertained a reassessment of modernity and of notions of ‘antiquity’ and of ‘origins’, both the origins of humanity and of organic life on the earth. To be sure, the predecessors of the Victorians had been preoccupied with questions about the origins of humankind, but they had not systematically challenged the idea that human history was recent, short and ‘modern’. Before the 1860s, the human past, indeed history as such, had been seen as recent in both absolute and relative means (to the age of the earth, fauna and flora). The 1860s witnessed challenges to biblical and scientific truths and the temporal expansion of the past to prehistory. As we shall see, the past expanded not only in temporal terms but geographically, and became more inclusive than ever with the discovery of ancient imperial civilizations. Running through the discovery of ancient pasts, as well as the preoccupation with relatively modern ones (such as the Tudor era, the age of democratic revolutions and industrialization) is a tension, which on occasions became unsolvable, between the progressionist and purposeful view of the past on the one hand, and disorderly narratives of national history and the history of empires, past and present. A fourth dimension is the increasingly visual nature of presentations of the past and its materialization. In particular periods that preceded the classical world of Rome and Greece and history with decipherable written records were visualized and materialized via discoveries of bygone material cultures. Moreover, the visual and material were not limited to spectacles and objects, but became ways and means for the understanding of the past and its interpreting. As Carlyle notes about the art of writing history, ‘tout est optique’ (Carlyle 1837: I, IV, IV: 106–7).

In the following I seek to address these four dimensions and relate them to mixed modernity. I attempt to weigh continuities in the historical culture, between the Victorian and the longer nineteenth century against breaks, thus locating Victorian historical culture in the nineteenth century. Such weighing may seem pedantic and at times artificial, but is essential, not only because of the framework of the project of *The Victorian World*. As a number of historians have warned, ‘Victorian’ and ‘nineteenth century’ may easily slide into synonyms, and to use these terms interchangeably may blur distinctions and change (Price 1996: 220–56). A survey of some continuities and changes is followed by a discussion of the extension of definitions of the past, and of notions about the ‘modern’ and the ‘ancient’, thence by an outline of the relationship between notions about history and the empire.

CONTINUITIES AND SOME CHANGES

A heightened and sometimes agonized awareness of temporality, accompanying the sense of unprecedented change, preceded the Victorians. Industrialization, the changes it wrought in the land and the countryside, demographic changes and the exponential growth of cities – particularly London – and the social ailments of accelerated capitalism had all obsessed pre-Victorians of different political hues and beliefs. These changes, and varying experiences of the political modern at the time of the democratic revolutions, impacted on individuals’ sense of change and its effect on the relationship between the past, present and future. Democratization of access to the past and its commercialization began in the decades between the 1790s and the late 1830s. These critical decades witnessed the development of a culture of history: a repertoire that included forms of knowledge about the past, representations and practices, which together constituted a dense grid of historical literary and visual genres, artifacts and the technologies that were utilized for the distribution of histories. The role of applied technologies was to remain central to the new culture of history and its economy. The rise of the historical novel, generally taken to have emerged as a new form in Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) and the ensuing series of the anonymously published ‘fictitious narratives intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland’ (Scott 1816: v) and comprising *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquarian* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817) and *Heart of Midlothian* (1818) has been studied expansively (De Groot 2010). Recently scholars across a number of disciplines have paid attention to other popular and durable forms of representation of, and knowledge about, the past that shaped the centrality of the visual and material in historical culture. At least two of these forms had preceded the historical novel and had already been established in Britain by 1800: the panorama and ceroplastics (wax modelling). These were not only forms for representing and handling the past; they offered ways and practices of observing, narrating and interpreting it. Like the novel they drew on technological innovation that proved vital to the diffusion and accessibility of history, helping to mass produce it (Melman 2006). Modernization of technologies of printing, engraving, publishing and the distribution of print material occurred between the 1800s and 1830s and included steel engraving, stereotyping, litho-tinting and electrifying, not to mention serialization in the form of a popular historical periodical press. The panorama

capitalized on innovations in optics in the eighteenth century and was patented by the Scottish surveyor and landscape painter Robert Barker about a year before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Literally translated as ‘an all embracing view’, in its narrowest and literal sense, ‘panorama’ designated both cylindrical paintings of 180 to 360 degrees and the purpose-built buildings in which they were exhibited, but was extended to all large-scale painting and later photography, still or moving. Panoramic painting created the illusion of expanding the range of human sight and of viewers’ control of the spectacle before them: it was ideal for monumentalizing large-scale and dramatic historical events and was initially used to represent the recent past, mostly military history (Altick, 1978; Hyde 1988; Oettermann 1997). Early panoramic spectacles included representations of campaigns and battles like Trafalgar, Copenhagen, Vittoria and the Nile. A new panorama of Waterloo, in Spring Gardens (at the Strand), premiered in 1824 and prospered for decades, together with Astley’s live show, *The Battle of Waterloo*, played in his amphitheatre to huge audiences with real cavalry advances and cannon fire. Waterloo, Wellington and Bonaparte received a new lease of life in the 1840s and 1850s, due to Bonaparte’s state burial in 1840, the February Revolution of 1848 and Wellington’s own funeral in 1852, and lingered as topics of panoramas until about 1860.

Alongside the growth of interest in panoramic representations of national history and heritage there evolved curiosity about ancient history. John Martin’s huge canvases, depicting themes from the Bible and the history of Mesopotamia are early examples of the interest in visual representations of pre-classical history drawing on the panorama technique. His *Fall of Babylon* (1817), *Destruction of Pompeii* (1821) and *Fall of Nineveh* (1828) translated onto canvas biblical and classical descriptions of the destruction of ancient empires and represented visions of urban apocalypse. At the same time these paintings reflected Martin’s numerous plans to improve and modernize London and his engineering projects for a water supply system and rationalized metropolitan public spaces (Martin 1828; Fever 1975). The effect and diffusion of his apocalypses were further extended due to the reproducibility of the paintings, particularly in affordable mezzotint printing. With the development of archaeology from the 1840s, panoramic representations of ancient history circulated in a variety of spectacles. Here too, newer forms of knowledge were added to, or grafted on, the earlier techniques. Thus the 1853 production of Byron’s famous *Sardanapalus*, staged at the *Princess Theatre* with Charles Kean in the title role, combined ‘spectacular tragedy’ with the theatrical form known as ‘realization’ (Meisel 1983): the visualization of texts (or of their illustrations), complete with staged dioramas, and copies and casts of the latest archaeological finds recently discovered by Austen Henry Layard and other archaeologists in the ruined Assyrian imperial cities of Nimrud, Khorsabad and Kujunjik. As the *Illustrated London News*, the mouthpiece of modern technologies, urban development and improvement, reported on 18 June 1853, the historical spectacle was ‘the most magnificent piece of stage mounting we have witnessed’ and that was connected ‘with the most astonishing of modern archaeological discoveries’, placing ancient Nineveh on stage with the aid of modern archaeology (*ILN*, 18 June 1853, 628: 493).

By the 1850s the panorama seems to have lost its exclusivity as a form of historical spectacle drawing large audiences. Its apparent decline in Britain, the

locus of its early development, is comparable to its later rise and surge on the Continent, particularly in France where it reached its apogee between the 1880s and 1900s, and may be related to the different paces of urban planning and building in the two countries (Melman 2012). However during the mid- and late-Victorian eras, panoramic spectacle was absorbed, and became integrated in, the theatre. Historical plays and ‘realizations’ appropriated optical technologies and an array of pyrotechnics and the manipulation of light, sight, fire and sound. History on stage became a multi-media spectacle that embodied the panoramic repertoire (even when departing from panoramas proper) and stressed the combination of realistic detail, optical illusion, music and movement. Charles Calvert’s revival of *Sardanapalus* in the provinces, at the *Duke Theatre*, London in 1877, and later in the US, incorporated a panoramic view over the Tigris from the terrace of the Assyrian king’s palace ‘with a distant prospect of the city’, battle tableaux, views of the ‘hall of Nimrud’ and thunder and lightening effects with ‘the profusion of fire and smoke being calculated to alarm timid spectators’ (*ILN*, 1 December 1877, 2003: 531). Theatrical effects and entrepreneurship are apparent in the pyrodramas at Belle-vue pleasure gardens, Manchester, inaugurated in 1852 and surviving into the 1950s (Mayer 1992: 184). Outdoor shows, where the scope of view of the spectators was more restricted than that in classical panorama, these pyrodramas displayed contemporary military episodes as well as historical ones and were performed on an island in an artificial lake. The incendiary spectacles attracted large audiences of working-class and rural railway tourists. *The Last Days of Pompeii*, staged in the 1880s and including an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, was the work of Joseph Harker, Henry Irving’s scene designer at the London Lyceum and its set pieces were theatrical.

The panoramic bird’s-eye survey of grand historical events and cataclysms, and the panorama as a technology of viewing, flourished during bouts of metropolitan ‘improvements’ and modernization in the 1820s and during the phase of metropolitan development between the 1850s and late 1870s. The grand scale and controlled view of the past fitted modernization and matched the grand lines of the liberal narrative of progress, which ordered history into a narrative of improvement and gave it meaning in the same way that panoramic views of cities ordered their chaos and cut from view poverty, congestion, pollution and violence. The panorama influenced historians and historical novelists who visualized the past in historical genres that combined historical detail with grand-scale narratives that could easily fit into the purposive and confident narrative of the national past. New histories that appeared from the late 1830s had a national and populist stance and a reformist agenda: the diffusion of a national education in history as a means to improvement. The reformist agenda, manifest in the serialized historical novels of William Harrison Ainsworth, in publications of radical publishers like Charles Knight, and in illustrated didactic periodicals such as the *Penny Magazine*, published from 1832 by the SDUK (Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge) and serving as a model for Continental illustrated magazines, such as the *Magazine Pittoresque*, exemplifies the Victorian penchant for rational recreation and serious leisure as a means towards improvement and a political equilibrium.

But alongside the confident and purposive versions of history there developed competing histories and interpretations in which the past was an uncomfortable

and disorderly place and the site of violence, danger and arbitrariness. Rather than celebrating liberties and purposively evolving towards a prosperous present, the competing histories utilized images of imprisonment and oppression and made the prison and scaffold their organizing metaphors. They were characterized by sensationalism and held ‘the attraction of repulsion’ (Dickens’s famous phrase). In contradistinction to panoramic history, sensationalist historical fiction and shows – most notably wax museums and hands-on enactments of imprisonment and punishment – represented a vision of the past ‘from below’, from street or subterranean level (of the dungeon). Ainsworth’s and Dickens’s novels depicting the unreformed eighteenth century (Dickens) or the Tudor era (Ainsworth) formulated images of a criminal and arbitrary past. In *The Tower of London* Ainsworth interrupts the panoramic and reformist view of history by insinuating the prison view of the past into narratives of the nation and state building. He intrudes into the panoramic scene of sixteenth-century London, seen from the top of the White Tower by the sinister Spanish ambassador to the Tudor court and his plebeian guide Winwike: ‘The last object upon which his gaze rested was the scaffold. A sinister smile played upon his features as he gazed upon it. “There”, he observed, “is the bloody scepter by which England is ruled. From the palace to the prison is a step – from the prison to the scaffold another’ (Ainsworth 1840: 128; 141). Ainsworth and his illustrator, George Cruikshank, extracted the past from an ordered and manageable development narrative and hectored readers/viewers to view the royal palace and the monarchy, past and present, as a huge gaol and execution ground, full of ‘dungeons’ and ‘subterranean passages’, inhabited by ‘jailors’ and prisoners, torturers and the tortured, ‘immured’ in the huge edifice’s recesses. The novel was instrumental in accessing the Tower and national museums and monuments in general to the broad public, as well as fixing its images as a prison. It was still in print when Soseki first came across it and was emulated and adapted to the stage and in political propaganda, which drew comparisons between oppression in the past and limits on citizenship in the present. It also encouraged a popular taste for hands-on displays of instruments of torture, which enjoyed great popularity in the 1880s and 1890s comparable to that at Madame Tussaud’s, where wax effigies of the victims and perpetrators of the Great Terror of the French Revolution attracted mass audiences (Hammond 1999: 144–74).

The combination of continuity and innovation drew on notions of temporality and history’s trajectory, which were even older than the ones outlined here and which were firmly imbedded in religion. Both historians of science and students of the role of religion in Victorian Britain have noted the centrality of a Bible culture that persisted well into the early twentieth century. A vernacular biblism had resonance across audiences and classes and these did not diminish during the processes of modernization (Bar Yosef 2005). To paraphrase Leslie Howsam, in the Victorian world the Bible enjoyed the status of a necessity compared by the Victorians themselves to that of trains and the penny post, two symbols of modernity (Howsam 1991: xiii). The Bible provided an arsenal of stories and images, and was deemed to be a historical sourcebook supplying the Victorians with narratives of the development of humankind across the ages. Belief in the recent origins of the human race, central to Judeo-Christian cosmologies and validated in seventeenth-century writings, such as Archbishop James Ussher’s (calculating the earth’s age as 6,000), was buttressed by later scientific writing.

As Bowdoin Van Riper has noted, the notion of the recent origins of the human race was as much a part of early Victorian science as it was central to Victorian religion. Even when the belief that human history and the history of the earth were coeval was abandoned, the idea that humans appeared shortly after the advent of the ‘modern world’ lent history a purpose and enshrined man’s place in the natural world as a sign of perfection, thus corroborating the story of the creation (Van Riper 1993: 5–6). The creationist myth and chronology were challenged earlier in the century by geological and paleontological discoveries, and were shaken in both these disciplines and in paleoanthropology in the 1860s. But a creationism separating human from planetary history lived on in new fields of study, which arose with the discovery of ancient Middle-Eastern civilizations, most notably in Biblical Archaeology, Assyriology and Egyptology (Grange 2006). In these fields historical knowledge based on material remains served to corroborate biblical texts, mainly prophetic ones, thus confirming the past’s role in a purposive worldview. Egyptologist Samuel Birch, inaugural president of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, enjoined its members to ‘collect from the past-perishing monuments of the Semitic and cognate races illustrations of their history and peculiarities; to investigate and systematize the antiquities of the ancient and mighty empires of primeval peoples, whose records are centred around the venerable pages of the Bible’ (Holloway 2006: 17). Even before his admonition numerous Assyrian commemorative monuments and bas-reliefs excavated in Mesopotamia were consistently interpreted for illustration of the sacred text. Notable examples include the serial pictorial bas-relief narrating the siege of Lachish, showing Judean captives led into slavery, the latter regarded as proof of the veracity of II Kings 18 and II Chronicles 32. As the *ILN* phrased it: ‘The sacred histories are adventitiously elucidated in these investigations . . . those monstrous monarchies . . . are surely no unworthy project of our retrospective contemplation’ (*ILN* 2 April 1853, 615: 257). Contemplation included the future as well as the past and the present. Not only *incidents* in Assyrian history were materially ‘proved’ to have occurred, but the entire outline of the history of the Assyrian empire served as a pattern to modern world history and the history of the British Empire. On 27 March 1847, a day of prayer for the victims of the famine in Ireland, sermons on the repentance of the Ninevites (described in the book of Jonah) pronounced starvation in the midst of imperial prosperity a sign of decline modelled on that of the ancient empires (*ILN*, 2 April 1847, 256: 201). Two years later, the Reverend F. H. Maude of Holy Trinity Church in Ipswich drew direct analogies between the history of the ancient empires and British imperial history and between their past and Britain’s future in a sermon entitled *Nineveh: A Warning to England* and interchangeable with numerous others, predicting that:

England will fall as Nineveh Fell. She will occupy the insignificant position now occupied by what were once mighty empires. She will present only the wreck of her present prominence. For wealth there will be poverty; for renown there will be ignominy. For power weakness, and for grandeur decay.

(Maude 1849: 16–17)

Maude related present imperial degeneration to the ailments of modernity, notably to overexposure to consumption and technology.

MODERN AND ANCIENT PASTS: HISTORY AND PREHISTORY

But the hold of biblical perceptions of history, as well as the persistence of non-religious progressionist narratives, were shaken in new disciplines and sciences with a stake in the past, notably historical archaeology, paleoanthropology and geology. These interrelated fields had affinities in their interest in the distant past and drew on similar practices of enquiry, including the methodical excavation of surfaces (increasingly on stratigraphy), methodical classification and, first and foremost, on the premium put on material remains as the main source of knowledge about the past. Interest in the remote past of humans and the antiquity of their origins completely changed the scope and definition of history, its relation to modernity and notions about history's place vis-à-vis the natural world.

Pre-Victorian and early Victorian preoccupation with the past focused on a relatively short and 'modern' historical repertoire. As already implied, antiquarian, historical and literary interest increasingly centred on national history and on a past that could be tied to the life of the nation, national institutions and the people. Popular and learned histories rarely extended to times earlier than the Roman conquest. True, the 1840s and early 1850s witnessed an explosion of interest in antiquity – both local and national antiquity – and ancient civilizations outside Europe. New national archaeological societies like the British Archaeological Association (BAA) and the Archaeological Institute (AI), which replaced the outdated and aristocratic Society of Antiquaries of London, were buttressed by the proliferation of 41 county archaeological societies, half of them established between 1840 and 1855. Their social make-up – middle-class professionals and amateurs engaged in serious leisure in the national organizations, and a combination of middle- and working-class enthusiasts in the network of local societies – testifies to the democratization of access to antiquity. Access was further democratized by cheap railway transport to archaeological locations. Notwithstanding these changes, fascination with pre-Roman Britons and the island's distant past did not match the enthusiasm for the 'Olden Time' (covering the period from the Tudors to the Restoration) or medieval revivalism. Initial lukewarm interest is apparent in the very term 'pre-history', first coined in France by Paul Tournal, coming into French use in the 1830s and introduced into English in 1851 by the Scottish Canadian archaeologist Daniel Wilson. The term denoted the time before written records. Although fieldwork from the late eighteenth century accumulated evidence that, according to this definition, history was recent and its timescale was dwarfed by that of pre-historic civilizations, the evidence was not integrated into scientific and public notions of the past. Of the 629 articles published between 1850 and 1859 in the three national archaeological periodicals, *Archaeologica*, *The Archaeological Journal* and *Journal of the British Archeological Association*, only 34, or 5.4 per cent, dealt with prehistoric topics; 491 papers, or 71.4 per cent, dealt with topics that covered medieval and later times (Van Riper 1993: 39). The range of articles reflected the scarcity of material evidence, but also pointed at the Victorians' need to select pasts that would be connectable to the present and the modern. This need is quite evident in Lord Northcote's distinction between two categories of the past, in his address to the BAA in 1861. There were relics 'which are so old,

which belong to a time far bygone, that they excite little else than wonder. You find others which carry us continuously up to the present day, and seem to have a more living and present interest for us' (Van Riper 1993: 43). The Middle Ages, the Tudor Age, the Civil War and the French Revolution were easily connectable to a variety of components that were germane to British modernity: the presence of the state in national life, the Reformation, the empire, the rise of commerce and cities, urbanization and crime, and early forms of capitalism. Moreover, the wealth of material evidence about everyday life in these periods, as well as in Roman Britain, continuously cropped up in the built urban environment and in the countryside.

But from about 1859 it was quite impossible to disregard the prehistoric. The trickle of previous material proofs gathered mostly in Britain and France, but also in Sicily, Belgium and Germany, was substantiated by the excavations in Brixham Cave in Devonshire, which unearthed tools among the remains of long-extinct animals. The Brixham finds, together with similar ones in Hoxne, Suffolk, the Somme Valley and the Neander Valley in Germany, were endorsed as evidence that tool-making men lived among mammoths. Empirical substantiation, the hallmark of the new sciences, made possible the support of the scientific community, including Britain's stellar geologists, archaeologists and anthropologists, with the publication of Charles Lyell's *Geological Evidence of the Antiquity of Man* (1863) and John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times* (Lubbock 1865). Prehistory expanded the scope of the past and seems to have relativized the term history itself. Chipped flint utensils and weapons and animal bones found near them were testimony that an enormously long Stone Age, especially the Paleolithic, dwarfed the Bronze and Iron Ages, not to mention the 'youth' of the so-called historical ages. Moreover, the Three-age system of periodization, originating in Denmark in the writings of Christian Thomsen and J. J. A. Worsaae, and considerably modified in Britain and France, seemed to have indicated a universal scale of human development over all of Europe, with no particular preference for inherent national traits. However prehistory too could be welded to and mobilized for the present. The subtitle of Lubbock's oeuvre is revealing. His discussion of prehistory stressed that it lived on in the lives, customs and manners of 'modern savages', whose development was arrested in the Stone Age (Lubbock 1865). In much of the historical anthropology of the mid-Victorian era 'modern' primitive people, living in colonial territories, are remains of the prehistoric, outside the universalized Western (and particularly British) scale of development: they are human fossils. Thus on the one hand the discovery of prehistory and its integration in an imminently secular view of the past made history and antiquity relative notions. It impacted biblical notions of the place and role of men in nature and skewed progressionist views in regards to national history as the gradual unfolding of special and inherent characteristics. On the other hand, prehistory too was located in a hierarchy of pasts that was seen to have progressively evolved from the prehistoric through the historic to the contemporary. Evolutionary anthropologists extended the linear scheme of human development to include nineteenth-century 'savage people', effectively non-white races, and their depiction of history easily accommodated a sense of racial superiority and a justification of colonial expansion.

EMPIRES PRESENT AND PAST

The colonial context of the proliferation of new notions of antiquity, apparent in the controversies over primitive and civilized people, is manifest in the Victorian discovery – in the most literal sense of this term – of more recent antiquities that, as we have already seen, were relatable to and integrated in cosmologies and religious histories. But here too discovery challenged the confident progress narrative and unsettled notions about continuity, evolution and the relationship between the past and the present. Discovery was sudden and dramatic and is definitely located in the mid 1840s, with the beginning of excavations in the Ottoman Pashalik of Mosul by French and British archaeologists Paul-Emile Botta and Austen Henry Layard, aided by British and Arab Assyriologists such as Henry C. Rawlinson, and Hormuzd Rassam, the first Assyrian Assyriologist. The unearthing of Mesopotamian culture was an addition to a repertoire of Classical and Egyptian antiquities, the latter excavated, collected, traded and investigated by British, French and Ottoman Egyptian Egyptologists (Colla 2007), and slowly absorbed in Western aesthetic and artistic canons. But what marked off Mesopotamia was the total lack of material remains over-ground. Until Botta and Layard's diggings Mesopotamia figured in British and Continental cultures as an absence, lacking material remains and a history outside biblical and classical texts. As Layard remarked in 1849 in his bestselling *Nineveh and its Remains*, the crude heaps of earth scattered in Northern Mesopotamia 'unlike the Roman and the Greek, have left no visible traces of their civilization'.

The Victorian fascination with the complete disappearance of Assyria, Babylon, Medes and the Hittite civilizations and with the scarce material remnants of the Persian empires is only superficially comparable to the flourishing interest in the extinct peoples of Europe and elsewhere. Mesopotamian history has had a long *textual* presence in British scholarship, literature and the arts and engendered vivid visual images, all dating back to the later Middle Ages. Mesopotamia's sudden presence and astounding popularity in Victorian historical culture are explainable by the materiality it acquired through the mediation of archaeology. The flow of archaeological finds to the British Museum was the source of an extraordinarily dense grid of new literary, visual and material reproductions of Assyria and a preoccupation with it that was a distinctly British phenomenon. The mounting corpus of archaeologists' writings, combining descriptions of their finds and historical surveys with the genre of travelogue, catered for substantial audiences. Abridged versions of Layard's books became railway literature, while the full versions were constantly ravaged by art and design historians like James Fergusson, biblical archaeologists like Joseph Bonomi, and Assyriologists. Like the Egyptian remains, Assyrian remains acquired the status of artifacts, rather than works of art, and an antique value. They also became consumers' goods and were copied, emulated and reproduced outside their original context.

The reproduction and diffusing of ancient material culture was made possible not solely by the accessibility of archeological finds to entrepreneurs and large audiences, but also due to the transnational and colonial pattern of the trade in, and circulation of, imitation 'ancient' objects. These were manufactured, exhibited and traded in Britain and on the Continent, notably in France and Italy, and between the colonies and the metropole. Reproducibility made the ancient past

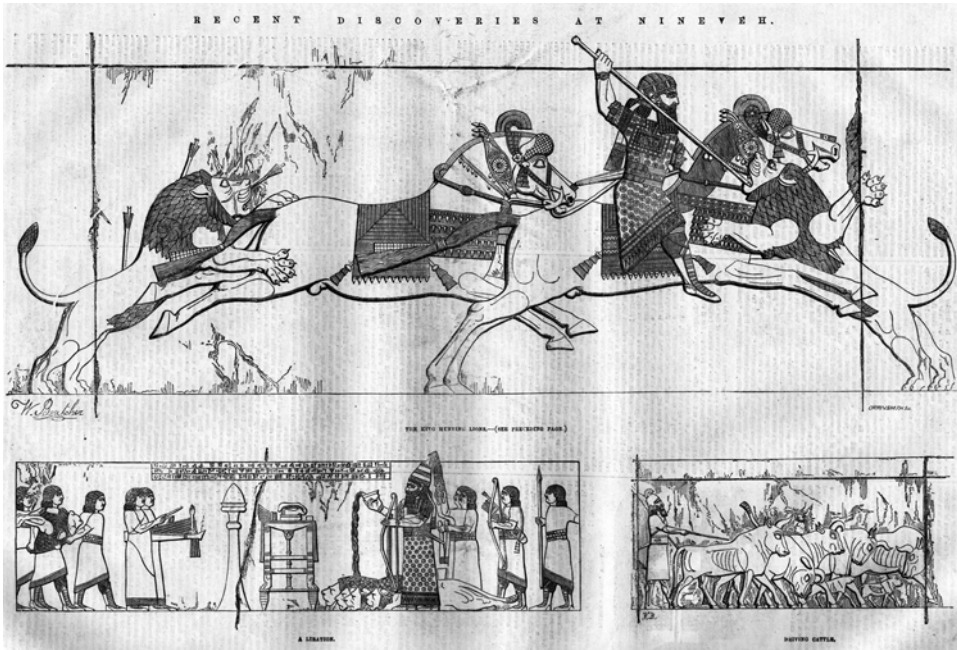


Figure 26.1 Recent discoveries at Nineveh, *The Illustrated London News*, 19 January 1856

even more accessible for consumption across different classes. Individual consumption is apparent in the vogue of imitations of Roman, Egyptian and Assyrian jewelry, known to the Victorians as ‘archeological jewellery’ and far more popular than medieval revival jewels (Rudoe and Gere 2010: 341). Revival ‘Assyrian style’, which enjoyed a particular vogue in Britain, drew on the reliefs and sculptures at the British Museum. They were introduced to designers and consumers at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and were displayed at the Paris and London International Exhibitions in 1866 and 1871. British designs were further emulated by such stellar ‘historical jewelers’ as the Castellani Brothers of Rome and Naples and Paul Emile in Paris and in the US. Replica Assyrian jewels were continuously advertized in the illustrated press, together with small-scale replicas of monuments such as the Nimrud Obelisk reduced to 20 inches and revival Assyrian statuettes of Assyrian kings and winged animals, made of Parian ware, for domestic display and uses. The taste for Assyrian jewels and ornaments persisted until the 1890s but reached its vogue between 1872 and 1874, when the registration of their designs by London and provincial firms peaked (Rudoe and Gere 2010: 393). This vogue is no doubt attributable to the tremendously publicized discovery and deciphering, by Assyriologist George Smith, of the eleventh tablet of the Epos of Gilgamesh in 1872. Jewels and domestic ornaments exemplify a consumption of antiquity that was both private and public and relatable to the modern habitus: a fashionable dress code and lived-in spaces. One representation of the modern appropriation of the ancient is the 1874 portrait of Mrs Goodall, wife of the artist Frederick Goodall,

wearing an Assyrian brooch securing a modern ribbon bow at her neck and Egyptian-looking earrings.

Diffusion and the democratization of access to antiquity is also manifest in large-scale display in an industrial capitalist environment that was metropolitan and imperial. And the metropolitan-imperial double-bind marks off the power of the ancient past in Victorian historical culture. It is no coincidence that both small artifacts and monuments were displayed in the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace and its 1854 successor in Sydenham, where a series of ancient and exotic ‘courts’ – Assyrian, Egyptian, Byzantine and Moorish – formed a museum of the history of architecture and artifacts. Like the labour force employed for colonial excavation and shipment of archaeological finds, labour employed for the reproduction of ancient replicas was on occasion colonial. An *ILN* quarto-size drawing dated 26 April 1851 features the interior of an ivory-cutting workshop in Berhampur, India, with the walls covered in life-size sketches of parts of animals, and local ivory-cutters seated, making imitation Assyrian miniatures for the Great Exhibition. In addition to objects, Assyrian motifs, designs and colours were integrated in the architecture and colour scheme of the industrially manufactured ready-to-assemble Crystal Palace. Its interior ironwork was painted red, blue and yellow, primary colours that were identified with ancient cultures and inspired by ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Modern applications of polychromic designs were propagated by Victorian Britain’s foremost theorist of design, Owen Jones, whose immensely influential *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856) reproduced examples of ancient ornamentation from excavations in the Middle East. Deliberately eschewing the standard revival styles of relatively modern periods, he preferred styles that were temporally or geographically distant: Muslim or Moorish, Assyrian, Egyptian and Indian. His history of styles thus blurred linearity and notions of progress and regarded ancient designs and material culture as suitable for modern life.

But the attraction of empires of the recent past (like the Elizabethan overseas empire) and extinct ancient empires went beyond their material presence or their exotic images. The histories of empires served as a model for history itself and as a framework for interpreting the pace and rhythm of change, as well as providing a way of thinking about modernity. The pattern detectable in the historical development of empires was not linear but cyclical and repeatable. Repeatability was apparent in the movement from imperial might and over-stretch towards decline, degeneration and fall. Analogues to the present and to Britain’s own expansion, apparent in popular biblism and discussed earlier, were rampant outside it. Some analogues, celebrating Britain’s imperial status as a ‘second Rome’, were optimistic and triumphalist. One late example is J. A. Cramb’s 1900 *The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain*, which described the cumulative historical cycles of political-cultural forms from city through nation to empire, noting that ‘Rome was the synthesis of empires of the past, of Hellas, of Egypt, of Assyria. In her purposes, their purposes lived . . . in Britain the spirit of Empire receives a new incarnation’. The spirit of the decayed empires survived and culminated in her (Cramb 1900: 179; 186–87). In earlier liberal Anglican uses, Rome’s place in the cyclical view of human history could be welded with the Whig notion of history as progress and indicate that the past of empires and their present were part of a

(divine) plan, and that the history of the world, as well as national history, were purposive and not arbitrary. The historical mind of the Arnolds, father and son, expressed in Thomas Arnold's 'The Social Progress of States' in 1835 and in Matthew's inaugural lecture as professor of poetry at Oxford in 1857, are both variations of this cyclical version of the Whig notion of change.

However the histories of empires projected another sense of the past and of the past's relationship to the present. This sense exuded uncertainty about the project of modernity and degrees of pessimism concerning the implications and price of progress, technology and boundless development. Forebodings that the future of Britain would reiterate the past of Rome, Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, focused on cities and, needless to say, on London, where spectacular development, rationalization and modernization coincided with the peak eras of the discovery of ancient civilizations. Urban building and improvement stood for progress and, at the same time, for regress, to the city's Roman past and to the destruction of other metropolitan centres. The building of modern infrastructure, including over-ground railways and junctions, embankments and the world's first modern sewage system caused unprecedented demolition of historical neighborhoods and residential areas, typically slums. Demolition of the traces of the past was the underside of construction. At the same time, excavating for progress was literally instrumental for uncovering the city's Roman past. This simultaneity of progress, destruction and discovery was chronicled by 'general' periodicals such as the *ILN* and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and by antiquary and archaeological magazines. The *Archaeological Journal* in 1888 listed Roman artifacts excavated in rescue-diggings in 208 different locations in London. And a review in *Archaeologica* in 1866 noted how the builders of sewers cast around Roman bricks (Zimmerman 2008: 129). Richard Roach Smith's collection of the antiquities of Londinium resulted from his mass salvaging of archaeological finds from the debris of construction. He wryly noted: 'The excavations, which led to those researches, were made for sewerage, for what is commonly termed "city improvements"' (Zimmerman 2008: 132–33), thus recognizing that modernization exposed the buried past and that, at the same time, the past may be London's own future and the empire's.

Images and fantasies of the future of the empire, which border on dystopia, are occasionally visualized even in the writings of spokesmen of the Whig vision of progress. One example is Macaulay's celebrated 1840 image of the New Zealander sketching the ruins of St Paul's from a broken arch of London Bridge, an image that received a new lease of life in Blanchard Jerrold and Gustav Doré's *London: A Pilgrimage*, published in 1872. In John Ruskin's *The Bull of Nineveh*, the winged animal substitutes for the colonial 'savage' as commentator on the future ruin of the imperial city, which repeats that of other empires:

For as the Bull-god once did stand
And watch'd the burial-clouds of sand,
Till these at last without a hand
Rose o'er his eyes, another land
And blinded him with destiny:
So may he stand again; till now,

In ships of unknown sail and prow,
Some tribe of the Australian plough
Bear him afar, a relic now
Of London, not of Nineveh

(Rossetti 1856: Stanza 19)

Like Macaulay's colonial explorer, Rossetti's future Australian colonizers are the colonized tribes of the present, and their spoilage of London's relics is to be carried away in the same way that the spoils of Nineveh were brought to the British Museum. It may be argued that the cyclical and repetitive narrative of imperial rise, decline and fall are compatible with the linear view of the past of which they are a version. However, some visions of the future of the imperial metropolis bore an imminently pessimistic view of history and its trajectory, and pessimism about progress was reinforced in the 1880s and 1890s by apprehensions about national and racial regress. Thus Richard Jefferies's *After London*, appearing in 1885 and subtitled *Wild England*, described the claiming of the metropolis and of civilization by nature, the submergence of industrial building material under swamps and marshes, and the barbarization of its inhabitants who would become: 'bushmen ... gypsies ... and half breeds' (Zimmerman 2008: 137).

These glimpses at a future, in which the Victorian present becomes the past, bring to the fore some of the complexities of the Victorians' preoccupation with history. Notwithstanding shorter and longer term continuities in notions of temporality, images of change and the technologies and apparatuses that were instrumental for the diffusion of historical knowledge, the scope and definition of the past transformed significantly during the Victorian era. Pasts multiplied and the enormous expansion of the scale of time from a biblical chronology to pre-history meant that the past was potentially endlessly stretchable. Such expansion was apparently relativist because it could relocate modern people vis-à-vis nature and question the direction of national histories. However, histories of antiquity reproduced imperial hierarchies among cultures and races, hierarchies that celebrated an ethnocentric notion of the present. Preoccupation with history was part and parcel of national consciousness, but it may not be comprehended as discretely national. The reproductions of the past discussed here were transnational and they may not be understood outside of empire. Visual technologies and technologies of printing and book distribution, the expansion of historical knowledge across a variety of disciplines such as archaeology, geology and paleoethnography, historical genres, forms and objects (like revival jewels and ornaments), all of these travelled between Britain, the Continent and the empire. The emerging historical sciences and popular histories depended on forms of collaboration between agents across national borders and between the metropolitan centre, the colonial margins and non-Western empires. Transnational exchanges are apparent in the spread of the panoramic apparatus from Britain elsewhere and in the work and careers of entrepreneurs such as Madame Tussaud's, but also in the close collaboration, across Europe, between geologists and paleoanthropologists. Collaboration with imperial margins, unequal and hierarchical as it was, is manifest in the work of Hormuzd Rassam and Ottoman and Ottoman Egyptian archaeologists, nationalists and antiquarians (Colla). The imperial framework provided a model for figuring out

historical change. It was bounded to a specifically Victorian historical experience of modernity, in which unprecedentedly accelerated development co-habited with traditional forms of labour, leisure, governing and disciplining. This primarily urban experience resonated in conflicted representations and preoccupation with the past. A sense of progress and of history's purpose characterizes both the wide range of creationist versions and 'secular' Whig interpretations, be they strictly linear or cyclical. But alongside this sense there developed competing narratives and notions that did not stress the rupture between past and present, but their coeval existence and the disturbing and foreboding burden of history's omnipresence.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LEARNING

Education, class and culture



Robert Anderson

INTRODUCTION

Many features of modern British education were established in the Victorian era. In 1870, the state accepted responsibility for ensuring that a basic education was available to all, and by the end of the century general literacy had been achieved. The system of ‘public schools’ for the elite developed as a uniquely English form of secondary education for boys, and was connected with the reform and modernization of Oxford and Cambridge, which were transformed from inward-looking religious institutions into centres whose ethos shaped Britain’s educational and cultural identity. Modern, middle-class alternatives to the public schools and to ‘Oxbridge’ were also a significant Victorian achievement. The result was a compromise with tradition, and a hierarchy of prestige in which the old dominated the new, but by 1900 it was possible to envisage a unified educational system under the general supervision of the state.

Education both reflected and shaped the forces that transformed nineteenth-century Britain. The most fundamental was the shift from a society in which commercial and industrial interests were subordinate to traditional authorities based on landed wealth, to an urbanized, industrial society. The growth of a new working class was the most striking result of this change, but the middle classes also became larger and more diversified. The constant advance of professionalization made formal qualifications of all kinds essential to middle-class careers, as ideas of merit and expertise replaced older networks of kinship and patronage, or apprenticeship to a practitioner. Schools, universities and examinations loomed ever larger in the strategies of middle-class families.

There was a huge cultural gap between schools and universities for the middle and upper classes and elementary schools for the masses. In effect, two systems of education determined by class developed independently. Class was also overlaid and complicated by gender and religion, and by the national differences within the United Kingdom: England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland each had a distinctive educational history. But the education of the elite, in the English public schools and ancient universities, remains a useful starting point.

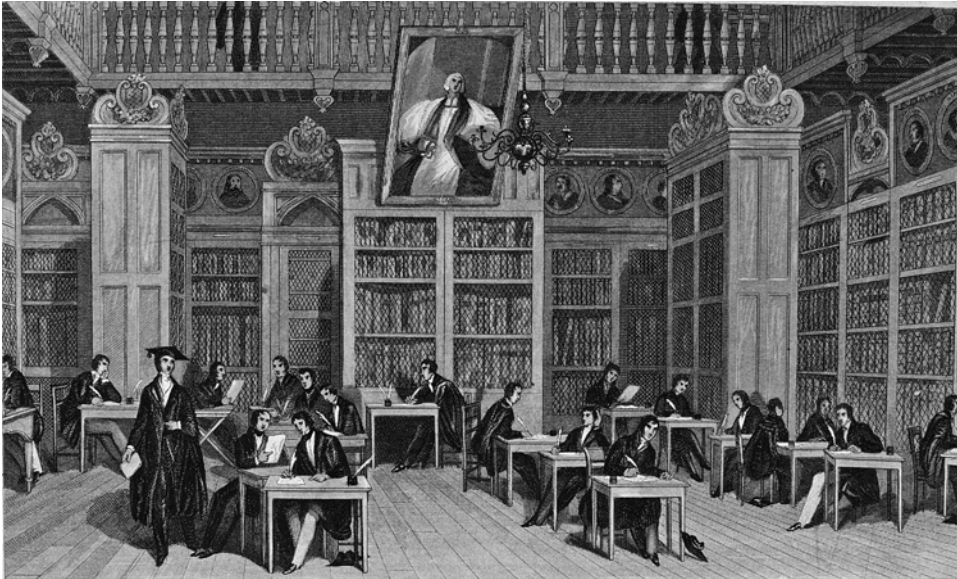


Figure 27.1 Written exams; illustration in M. Seaborne, *A Visual History of Modern Britain: Education* (Studio Vista, 1966), plate 136

MATTHEW ARNOLD: SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

So do the writings of Matthew Arnold, who defined culture as ‘acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world’, to be achieved through the study of literature, especially the Greek and Roman Classics. Cultural ‘sweetness and light’ were especially needed by the materialist and ‘philistine’ middle classes created by commerce and industry; Hellenism, the ideal of harmonious living presented by Classical Greece, would be a corrective to the narrow ‘Hebraism’ associated with Nonconformist religion. Arnold looked to Continental models of education: he spent his professional career as a school inspector, and in the 1860s he was sent to report on foreign educational systems. He was impressed by the urban secondary schools of France and Germany, and wanted the state to create a similar system of day schools in England. He also championed provincial universities to civilize the great industrial towns. Arnold’s advocacy of positive state action was at odds, however, with the political culture of his time, which was suspicious of centralized bureaucracy, and his hopes were realized only in slow and fragmentary form. A further aspect of Arnold’s ideas was his belief that in a secularizing society a new intelligentsia could give the cultural and intellectual leadership formerly given by the church. This concept of a ‘clerisy’ derived from Samuel Coleridge, and Arnold is often seen as part of an idealist stream of thinkers inspired by Germany, contrasted with the Benthamite utilitarianism that was the main legacy of the Enlightenment to British thought.

THE REFORM OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Religious issues were central to university reform in the early Victorian period. Oxford and Cambridge were much criticized for their intellectual sloth, but they remained at the heart of the English establishment because of their two social functions; first, they served the landed aristocracy and gentry, training them for public and parliamentary life and for a few prestigious professions like law. Second, they provided the Church of England with most of its clergy. The church wanted its clergy to be educated alongside the social elite, and to have a standard gentlemanly education rather than specialized training in theology. With a university-trained clergyman in every parish, Oxford and Cambridge had a national presence. The church saw itself as a national church, allied with a Protestant state that expressed England's historic identity, and there was fierce resistance to opening the universities to anyone without an Anglican allegiance. The increasing political strength of Nonconformists and Roman Catholics eventually made this position untenable, but it was not until the 1850s that Parliament embarked on the reform of Oxford and Cambridge, a process that continued until the 1870s; the general abolition of religious tests in 1871 was a crucial secularizing measure, reflecting an underlying shift in British intellectual life, as religion became a matter of personal choice, and agnosticism an acceptable stance.

The reform of Oxbridge (the term dates from 1855) was a compromise between external political pressures and internal reformers. This compromise preserved the primacy of the colleges over the universities themselves. Colleges were not only distinctive social and moral communities, but the centres of teaching. It was in the late Victorian period that the system of individual tuition today seen as traditional actually developed – ‘a striking and historic change’ (Rothblatt 1968: 231). Close supervision by college fellows, and constant critique of the student's work in essays and other exercises, was combined with a pastoral ideal of personal relations between teacher and pupil. The summer reading party, in Scotland, the Lake District or the Alps, was a notable Victorian innovation. Communal life was designed, as in the public schools, to develop individual character and a sense of duty to the wider community. This collegiate ideal inspired Newman's *The Idea of a University*, originally lectures related to the creation of a Catholic University at Dublin in the 1850s, but based on Newman's experience as a college tutor in unreformed Oxford. Newman gave classic expression to the ideal of liberal education as the pursuit of excellence: the purpose of university education is the perfection of the individual's intellect and personality, to be achieved through the disinterested pursuit of truth. Knowledge should be sought for its own sake, not for utilitarian or purely professional ends. ‘Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence’. The university should be a place of universal knowledge, where disciplines are tied together by a common philosophy – for Newman, naturally, a religious one. Such a liberal education is generalist rather than specialized, preparing a man ‘to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility’ (Newman 1960: 92, 135).

Like Arnold, Newman gave the Classics a central educational role, though mathematics was more important at Cambridge. Both subjects were valued because they disciplined and exercised the mind, and this view of education was intensified

by the development of honours examinations to encourage serious study. In the ‘tripos’ at Cambridge or the ‘schools’ at Oxford, a ‘First’, or still better a ‘double First’, was an achievement that could make a man’s career. The competitive mentality that divided graduates into first, second and third classes became an enduring feature of British academic culture. From the 1850s onwards, the curriculum was extended to include new subjects like history, modern languages and natural science. College statutes were reformed, so that fellows became full-time professional teachers rather than clergymen awaiting preferment in the church. Oxford and Cambridge were turned into efficient educational machines, without losing their social prestige and their connection with the state and the governing class.

UNIVERSITIES, PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL ASSIMILATION

The reform of the ancient universities was closely connected with that of the public schools, as these expanded from a handful of aristocratic schools to a national system of secondary education for the professional and business classes. As headmaster of Rugby from 1828 to 1842, Thomas Arnold (Matthew Arnold’s father) created a new educational ideal: emphasis on religion and moral earnestness, gentlemanly conduct, pupil self-government through the prefect system, and careful preparation for university work in the sixth form, supervised directly by the headmaster. Arnold was conservative in his views on the curriculum, where Latin and Greek remained sacrosanct, nor was he personally much interested in games, though athleticism – cricket, football and rowing, all demanding team effort – soon became an integral part of public-school life. Arnold was not the only school reformer of his day, but became the most famous through his pupils, many of whom went on to transform other schools. One disciple was Thomas Hughes, author of the popular novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857). Arnold’s Rugby was especially influential because it developed close links with Oxford, passing on the spirit of reform and the ethos of public service; *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* had a less famous sequel, *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861). Hughes’s books, and his own career as a ‘muscular Christian’ social reformer, showed how Arnold’s original religious and intellectual ideals were transformed into a rather cruder ethos of manliness, conformism and hearty philistinism. The social significance of the public schools and the reformed universities was that they inducted a large part of the rising middle class into the values of the old aristocracy, and gave them a share in administering the state, so defusing some of the social tensions created by industrialization. By 1900 the Headmasters’ Conference, the body which spoke for the public schools, had about 100 members (Honey 1977: 249). There was no precise definition of a public school, but there was no difficulty in recognizing public-school men, their code of conduct and their mode of speech. The system was reinforced by the growth of ‘preparatory’ boarding schools for younger boys, and of ‘old school tie’ networks in adult life.

Public schools and universities had always allowed the sons of the wealthy to be absorbed into the upper classes and to enter British public life – William Gladstone, son of a Liverpool merchant, being a notable example. Their opening to a wider middle class continued this process, creating a distinctive social stratum

shaped by gentlemanly values and liberal education. But historians have disagreed about where the balance lay. Were the aristocracy taming the middle class, and using education to perpetuate their own influence and values? Or were the reformed universities, like the public schools, essentially middle-class agencies, guaranteeing continuity and social stability while producing a functional elite to administer a modern industrial and imperial state? These questions are linked with another controversy, over whether anti-vocational prejudices and the neglect of science undermined the entrepreneurial spirit and led to British economic decline. It was certainly true that, despite the importance of science at Cambridge, modern subjects lacked prestige. If the Classics had ceased to be the common frame of reference that they were for Gladstone's generation, they still seemed the best training for the future civil servant or proconsul, as in the 'Greats' course at Oxford, which combined classics, philosophy and ancient history. Greece offered the ideal of Platonic leadership, Rome a model for the imperial *pax Britannica*.

Oxford and Cambridge drew a large and increasing proportion of their students from public schools, and their graduates filled the top level of many British professions and dominated Westminster and Whitehall. Especially significant were the competitive examinations for the top levels of the civil service, at home and in India, first proposed in the Northcote-Trevelyan report of 1853, and the general rule by the 1870s. As the examinations were closely tied to university curricula, they were dominated by Oxbridge graduates. These still included sons of the landed aristocracy, but the bulk came from the professional classes (Curthoys and Howarth 2000: 577–78; Becher 1984–85; Brooke 1993: 601–3). For ambitious students who took their education seriously, competition could be strenuous, but Oxford and Cambridge always found room for undergraduates who put sport and social life before study, and who were allowed to take 'pass' degrees. Many honours graduates went into routine (but still influential) occupations like school teaching and the clergy. Colleges varied in their social character. But some of them – King's at Cambridge, Balliol at Oxford – cultivated intellectual achievement; Benjamin Jowett, master of Balliol between 1870 and 1893, was notorious for his worship of examination success and for pushing Balliol men into influential positions. The other side of this was an ideal of public service and social obligation, encouraged by Balliol figures like the idealist philosopher Thomas H. Green and the historian Arnold Toynbee. Toynbee Hall, in working-class East London, founded as a memorial after Toynbee's early death, was the first of many such university settlements. A similar spirit lay behind the university extension movement, originating in Cambridge, which took university-style lectures to provincial towns throughout England, though mostly to middle-class audiences. University extension was a British innovation imitated elsewhere in Europe, and inspired 'popular universities' in countries like France, Spain and Belgium.

TEACHING OR RESEARCH?

The pressures making for university reform were not only social. The Victorian period saw the professionalization of science and scholarship, and the growth of a new academic culture based on the advancement as well as the diffusion of knowledge. Here Germany provided an influential model, derived especially

from the founder of Berlin University in 1810, Wilhelm von Humboldt. In the ‘Humboldtian university’, teaching and research were both essential, and fused in a ‘community of students and scholars’, but original research and the pursuit of truth took priority, as the essential definition of a university’s task. Matthew Arnold admired Humboldt, but Newman’s university ideal was about teaching, not research. As seminaries of the social elite, Oxford and Cambridge shared this view of the primacy of teaching, and there was much resistance to specialized research. Nevertheless, the German example, and the leadership that Germany’s universities achieved in so many branches of science and scholarship, eventually imposed change, and a compromise between teaching and research emerged.

In the early nineteenth century, while Oxford and Cambridge stagnated, much intellectual activity centred on London, pursued by literary men or leisured individuals. History, philosophy and literature were the province of the great quarterly journals rather than the universities, and writers hoped to reach the general educated public rather than a purely scholarly audience. But with the advance of professionalization, disciplinary communities defined themselves through rigorous methodological criteria, learned societies and specialized journals – *Mind*, for philosophy, was an early example in 1876. Scholarship moved into the universities, and work done outside them began to be considered amateurish. This was especially striking in science, where the need for expensive laboratories made independent research impractical, and where competition was international. The Cavendish laboratory at Cambridge, founded with private money in the 1870s, became one of the world’s great centres of theoretical physics. Science was rather weaker at Oxford, and academic professionalization was generally slower in Britain than in most countries, but in fields like classics, history or early forms of social science like economics, comparative law and anthropology, it was now university scholars who led the field. Champions of the research approach argued that Oxbridge teaching traditions failed to encourage original thinking, instead rewarding superficial literary performance and the winning of competitive prizes. The tension between research and teaching was resolved in practice by excluding merely vocational subjects, and by the argument that training in scientific and scholarly methods could itself be a form of liberal education. Learning for its own sake, the encouragement of critical and independent thought, the relation of specialized work to general principles – these could be cultivated by the right sort of new discipline as well as by traditional ones. On balance, however, Oxford and Cambridge, and other British universities following them, remained wedded to an educational rather than a research-based idea of the university.

THE CIVIC MODEL: SCOTLAND

The reform of the ancient universities returned them to the centre of national life, and reconnected them with the political, social and literary life of London, now little more than an hour away by train. The ‘end of the universities’ isolation from metropolitan culture’ (Harvie 1976: 54) led in turn to ‘the “Oxbridgization” of the upper reaches of intellectual activity’ (Collini 1991: 19). As residential institutions the universities, like the public schools, drew their students from every part of England, and to some extent from other parts of the United Kingdom. They gave

a common identity to a national elite divorced from its local origins. But Britain was a country of four nations, and the English 'national' model of education coexisted with a 'civic' model, which linked education much more closely to regional and local communities. Education in Ireland was so distinctive that it will not be discussed here; its schools and universities reflected the religious and cultural divisions within Irish society, though there were many links with England and Scotland at the university level. It was Scotland that provided the earliest civic model.

Education in Scotland had continued to follow its own path after the union of 1707. The four Scottish universities were unitary rather than collegiate, and teaching was through professorial lectures. Unlike Oxford and Cambridge, they gave a full professional education in medicine, law and divinity, and served the elites of the cities in which (apart from St Andrews) they were situated. Most Scottish students came from the city and the surrounding region, and lived at home or in lodgings. Secondary schools in the towns were also closer to Continental than English patterns: Scottish 'burgh schools' were day schools, and were genuinely public, being run by town councils (after 1872 by elected school boards). Most of them admitted girls as well as boys. The Scottish middle classes were generally content to use their local schools and universities, which gave them a distinct intellectual and cultural identity. Scotland was also an exporter of talent, as her teachers, doctors and engineers made careers both in England and in the empire. In the civil service examinations, only the Scottish universities (and Trinity College, Dublin) could compete with Oxford and Cambridge. This export of talent was fuelled by overprovision of university places, for as late as 1861 Scotland, with a tenth of the population, had more university students than England. Many came from rural areas, where parish schools could prepare directly for university entry. Not many Scottish students were drawn from really poor families, but there were far more than in England from the lower middle class or skilled working class (Anderson 1983: 308–24). During the nineteenth century, the constitutions and curricula of the Scottish universities were overhauled to respond to modern demands, but the tradition of the 'democratic intellect' was maintained, and the emphasis on professional training, following a broad general education in Classics, philosophy and science, made the Scottish universities as hostile in their own way to specialized research as Oxbridge.

LONDON AND THE ENGLISH PROVINCES

Both Scottish and German models inspired the first English challenge to Oxbridge. It seemed an anomaly that London, as Britain's capital and largest city, had no university. The 'University of London' founded in 1828 was intended to fill that gap, but also to escape from Anglican control and to express the utilitarian spirit. Its founders included Nonconformists and disciples of Jeremy Bentham, and it had no religious tests. This separation of education and religion provoked vigorous opposition, and Anglicans founded the rival King's College in 1831 as a riposte. Neither college had the right to award degrees, a power that only the state could confer, and in 1836 a statutory University of London was created to provide impartial examinations for the two colleges (the 1828 college was now renamed University College), and for other institutions that were allowed to affiliate to it.

In 1858, affiliation was abolished, and University of London degrees were opened to all who could pass the examinations, wherever they were educated. The ‘examining university’ divorced from teaching was an invention with a future. The 1858 reform also introduced London medical degrees, and although these were not open to all, they incorporated the medical schools of the big London hospitals. The importance of medicine in university education should be stressed. Medical students were a very large element in the Scottish universities, and the English provincial universities usually took over existing, privately founded medical schools. Medical students now needed laboratory training in chemistry, pathology and microbiology as well as clinical experience. From 1858 a university degree or its equivalent was needed to practice as a doctor, and Victorian doctors liked to see themselves as men of science.

The University of Durham was founded as an Anglican preserve in 1834, and the non-denominational Owens College in Manchester introduced university education to England’s industrial capital in 1851. But neither of these northern institutions, nor indeed the London colleges, attracted many students. It was only after Oxford and Cambridge had been reformed that the civic sector expanded, so missing its chance to challenge their prestige. Nevertheless, the provincial university colleges that appeared at Newcastle (1871, as a dependency of Durham), Leeds (1874), Bristol (1874), Sheffield (1879), Birmingham (1880), Liverpool (1881) and Nottingham (1881) were a striking development, and a clear expression of local initiative, in which the state was not involved. Sometimes Oxford or Cambridge extension classes paved the way. Businessmen and other local notables, like Joseph Chamberlain at Birmingham, took a close interest in the colleges, supported them financially, and served on their governing councils. University colleges expressed the same civic pride and cultural aspirations as the museums, art galleries or town halls with which they shared urban space. When Liverpool opened its Victoria Building in 1892 (said to be the origin of the term ‘redbrick’), the slogan carved on its facade was ‘For advancement of learning and ennoblement of life’ (Kelly 1981: 83). The new colleges followed the Scottish non-residential and professorial model, and had something of the same social profile. In Wales, the colleges founded at Aberystwyth (1872), Cardiff (1883) and Bangor (1884) had a distinctively democratic ethos.

‘With a National University, we shall make ourselves a nation’, said the principal of Aberystwyth in 1896 (Jenkins 1993: 3). Universities represented the distinct cultures of Scotland, Wales and Ireland more clearly than other sectors of education. They also reflected a division within England between metropolis and province. When the civic universities began, they were ‘both expressions and agencies of a provincial culture striving for self-assertion’ (Jones 1988: 3), but by the end of the century the provinces were losing their vigour, as better communications, democratic politics and an expanding press created a more homogeneous national culture. The civic universities began to adopt Oxbridge values and ways of thinking, not least because many of their professors were Oxbridge trained. Some historians accuse them of selling out on their original mission: ‘they retreated from the full-blown “scientism” which had been used to justify their establishment, towards the “defining institutions”, Oxford and Cambridge’ (Lowe 1987: 172). Even in London University, it has been said, arts education became ‘a virtual dependency of

Oxbridge' (Thompson 1990: 68). The modern universities gave an education tied to local professional needs, and often industrial ones as well; they were willing, as Oxford and Cambridge were not, to embrace applied science and vocational subjects, and offered a practical, non-denominational and relatively cheap education to middle-class families. But their resources were limited, and from 1889 they depended on grants from the state. Oxford and Cambridge remained the largest as well as the most privileged English universities, firmly at the top of the hierarchy in the emerging national university system.

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

One of the forces driving university development was the movement for women's education. Change began in the 1850s, when pioneers like Dorothea Beale at Cheltenham and Frances Buss at the North London Collegiate School introduced an academic type of schooling that claimed equal intellectual status for women. There was some development of girls' public schools on Arnoldian lines, but day schools were generally preferred, and North London became the model for a chain of similar high schools. But the lack of professional outlets for women and conservative family attitudes limited the scope of this development. Among the aristocracy and the rich, it remained normal to use small private schools or to educate girls at home. Leslie Stephen, the father of Virginia Woolf (born in 1882) was a former Cambridge don and liberal intellectual, but a typical Victorian paterfamilias in not sending his daughters to school.

The growth of academic secondary education for girls created a need for better-educated teachers, and led logically to the demand for women to enter universities. By the end of the 1860s many towns had university-level lectures for women, and the circles who patronized these often had close connections with the foundation of the new university colleges, which were open to women from the start, as were London University degrees from 1878. The 1870s also saw the foundation of women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. The founder of Girton College at Cambridge, Emily Davies, was notable for insisting that women should compete with men on the highest intellectual level. Oxford and Cambridge women students were allowed to take university examinations, where their performance vindicated Davies's hopes, but the universities refused to give women degrees. The colleges gave important opportunities for women academics, but remained on the fringes of university life. More surprisingly, women were only admitted to the Scottish universities in 1892, because change required legislation. In London, the older colleges became mixed, but there were also separate women's colleges – Bedford (1878), Westfield (1882) and Royal Holloway (1886). Whether in a mixed or a single-sex environment, women's university experience was inevitably restricted. Men and women students led separate social lives constrained by the conventions of middle-class propriety. The civil service, law and most other professions besides teaching remained closed to women. Women targeted medicine as the profession most likely to open its doors, and by 1900 a handful of women doctors had qualified; but opposition from the existing medical schools had proved intransigent, and separate schools for women were founded in London and Edinburgh by the pioneers Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Sophia Jex-Blake. University women,

including teachers in the new secondary schools, carved a niche in Victorian society, but did not overthrow the view that marriage was the true destiny of middle-class women.

MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOLS

One difficulty for the English provincial universities was that a corresponding sector of modern urban secondary schools struggled to emerge. By the 1860s there was a widespread feeling that the schools available to the broad middle class were chaotically organized and intellectually inadequate. Most English towns had an ancient grammar school, with charitable endowments intended to help poorer boys reach the universities, but few were now working efficiently, and many were in advanced decay. Most families relied on private schools. The case for reform was eloquently put by Matthew Arnold, but Parliament was not prepared to pay directly for middle-class education, or to give central direction. State intervention was accepted for working-class education, despite *laissez-faire* economic principles and stock prejudices against Continental-style bureaucracy, because it was recognized that neither the market nor voluntary effort could achieve the universal standards needed in an industrialized, democratic country. But in the secondary field, there was legislation (from 1869) only for the piecemeal reform of local endowments. A common pattern of reformed grammar schools began to emerge, and private schools declined. But much depended on local conditions, and the movement did not do much for poorer pupils, as endowments were turned into scholarships based on examination success rather than poverty, which favoured middle-class families. To move from an elementary to a secondary school was difficult and uncommon. Girls also did less well than boys, as they had fewer ancient endowments to provide funds. It was only in 1902 that local authorities were required to organize adequate secondary education for both sexes, though there were earlier moves towards national systems in Wales (1889) and Scotland (1892).

Wealthier business families in England were inclined to consolidate their social ascension by sending their sons to public schools and Oxbridge, rather than patronizing local schools and colleges. The new grammar schools themselves began to look to Oxbridge as the outlet for their best pupils, and to compete with the public schools for college scholarships; winning these became the mark of a school's prestige. Schools also tried to appoint Oxbridge-trained teachers, and adopted public-school features like organized games. The values of elite education were thus spread more widely. This also affected the curriculum, usually based on academic subjects like Latin, modern languages, English, mathematics, science, history and geography – but excluding vocational or commercial subjects.

This became a matter of complaint from the champions of scientific and technical education. As international economic competition became fiercer in the last decades of the century, British industry seemed dangerously dependent on empirical methods. Progress now depended, it was argued, on scientific research; trained scientists and engineers were needed in the higher ranks, effective technical training lower down. Germany once more provided the model to be imitated, and was beginning to challenge Britain as an industrial power. There were several government inquiries into these issues, giving a platform to lobbyists like Thomas Huxley,

the Scottish scientist Lyon Playfair and the physicist James Clerk Maxwell, who declared in 1873 that ‘original research’ was ‘the fountain-head of a nation’s wealth’ (Turner 1993: 175), but the state’s response was sluggish. At a practical level, technical education was an expanding force, supported since the 1850s by government examinations and grants. Technical education was mostly given in part-time evening classes, backed up by a cluster of scientific and technical institutions in South Kensington, which in 1907 were to be amalgamated as Imperial College. This world of technical colleges and classes enjoyed little social prestige, but played an important part in local life, and gave opportunities for social advancement to many who could not afford a lengthy formal education.

A THIRD MODEL: THE EXAMINING UNIVERSITY

The collegiate, residential pattern of elite education, with its emphasis on character formation as well as intellectual training, came to be seen as the characteristic English contribution to educational ideals. The civic pattern of non-residential institutions, serving local and regional communities, also expanded. But there was a third model, of education defined in terms of examination tests, represented at the highest level by the ‘examining university’; Robert Lowe, Liberal minister for education in the 1860s, once said that ‘what I mean by an University is an examining board’ (Anderson 2006: 110). The concept of university education as the acquisition of facts and skills, to be tested by impartial examination, was as characteristic of the age as Newman’s social and moral ideal. Indeed, belief in examinations as a test of merit and a guarantee of standards ran through Victorian education at every level.

Examining universities could be of different types: open to any individual, open to candidates from affiliated bodies, or serving a federation of colleges. The original London University of 1836 was an examining board devised to provide neutrality between rival religious denominations, and examining universities introduced in Ireland (the Queen’s University of 1850, the Royal University of 1880) retained this function. But with the reformed London University of 1858, the examining university became a valuable way of connecting scattered foundations to a central authority, maintaining common academic standards in the early stages of academic growth, and assessing students impartially. The university colleges in provincial England could not at first award their own degrees, and their students took London examinations. In 1880 a separate examining university was founded for northern England, the Victoria University, which federated Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. The federal University of Wales of 1893 served the three Welsh colleges. This survived as a symbol of national cultural revival, but otherwise the examining university began to fall into disrepute. Could there be a true university without its own teaching staff, without research, and without corporate life? Examinations and teaching needed to be integrated. A long campaign for a ‘teaching university’ led to the reconstitution of London University in 1898–1900, with constituent colleges enjoying autonomy within a federal structure; the external degree survived separately. These reforms opened a new era of dynamism for London as a centre for teaching and research. Outside the capital, Birmingham obtained independent

degree powers in 1900 under Chamberlain's leadership, and was soon followed by the stronger university colleges. The Victoria University broke up in 1904.

EDUCATION AND EMPIRE

From at least the 1880s, the British Empire and its achievements came to seem inseparable from British identity. Elementary schools sought to instil imperial enthusiasm through history and geography, though historians have questioned how effective this was. There is less doubt about the impact of empire on the public schools, where many pupils aimed at careers in the armed forces or the colonies, and where the cult of games overlapped with the ideal of imperial service. It was at the university level, however, that institutional links were closest. British university models may not have had much influence elsewhere in Europe, but they certainly did in the wider world, including the United States, where they helped inspire the campus model. The architecture of Oxford and Cambridge, though not their collegiate organization, was widely imitated. Most universities in the British empire were either predominantly unitary, or combined unitary colleges with an examining university: the examining model seemed especially suited to colonial conditions. In Canada early developments were directly influenced by Scotland, though French-Catholic models and the American state university were also influential. In India, the first Western-style universities were founded by the state in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras; these added an extensive examining function for affiliated institutions to a unitary base. Australia, where the year 1857 also saw foundations at Sydney and Melbourne, made less use of the examining university, but it was found in South Africa and notably in New Zealand, where the University of New Zealand began in 1870 and extended to four constituent colleges.

By the early twentieth century, the universities of the empire could be said to 'stand apart from the universities of other parts of the world in a class by themselves', and to be 'recognizably British' (Newton 1924: xiv). Terminology, ceremonies, and teaching traditions had a family resemblance, and there were links in both directions. Among male Oxford graduates, perhaps a fifth had careers in the empire (Symonds 1986: 306–8), while many students from India and the white colonies came to Oxford, Cambridge, London or Scotland, to study medicine or law as well as more general subjects, and some stayed to enrich British academic life. Academic staff often went from Britain to overseas universities, and a chair in Canada or Australia could be a stepping-stone back to one in Britain. The Rhodes scholarships at Oxford did not start until 1902, but university education was already seen as a force for creating and solidifying 'greater British' sentiment; one motive for turning London into a teaching university was to make it the metropolitan university of the empire.

THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE

At the beginning of Victoria's reign, about two-thirds of men and half of women could sign their names – a standard test of literacy, though it probably underestimates the ability to read. In Scotland, the corresponding figures were nearly 90 per cent for men and 75 per cent for women (Sutherland 1990: 124; Anderson

1995: 101). Scotland had long had a legally established system of parish schools, and efforts to improve popular education in England focused initially on increasing school attendance and providing better qualified teachers. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 is rightly remembered as a landmark, though it came when attendance and literacy were already rapidly improving. The act did not make education compulsory (though its Scottish equivalent in 1872 did, and England and Wales followed suit from 1876), nor did it abolish school fees (this dates from around 1890). It did not mark the first intervention of the state, which had been giving grants and laying down standards since the 1830s. But it did make efficient schools available to all, by filling in the many gaps in provision, especially in industrial areas where mines and factories relied on child labour, and in the slums of the big cities.

Before 1870 most organized working-class education was given by charities or churches, and the acts of 1870 and 1872 marked a shift of basic responsibility from church to state. The Church of England retained control of its own schools after 1870, especially in the countryside, where clergy and landowners kept them under close supervision, but now non-denominational ‘board schools’ appeared alongside them where needed, run by elected school boards; in Scotland school boards were universal, and most church schools were transferred to them. In London and other big cities the school boards became influential bodies attracting able members and pioneering progressive ideas. The massive Victorian schools still so conspicuous in Britain’s inner cities are their legacy. They were also among the first public bodies where women could both vote and become members.

Standard histories of education, which emphasize legislation and state action, may underestimate the richness and diversity of early Victorian popular culture. Many autodidacts were to be found among artisans and other literate workers, and much informal education was available, whether in the Mechanics’ Institutes, usually under middle-class patronage, or from radical movements like Chartism and Owenite cooperatives. Sunday Schools, in their early years, were as much concerned with the general education of adolescents as with religious education, and were especially strong in the Nonconformist churches; by the end of the century, they reached a high proportion of working-class children. Along with the religious education given in elementary schools, and membership of church-based youth movements such as the Boys’ Brigade (1883), Sunday schools ensured that the stories of the Bible, the life of Jesus and popular hymns remained familiar to all, in a society still tied together by Christian culture.

Full-time schooling, by contrast, was both heavy-handed in its attempts to impose religious orthodoxy and social subordination, and mechanical in its use of the teaching methods satirized by Dickens in *Hard Times* (1854). To teach religion and morality through the Bible and the Anglican Catechism, and to form the habits of discipline, obedience, punctuality and cleanliness needed in an industrializing society, were as important as teaching basic literacy. The Victorian elementary school was ‘a microcosm of the competitive, authoritarian, class-ridden world outside’ (Perkin 1969: 295). The passion for examinations found yet another application in the system of ‘payment by results’, making state grants to schools

dependent on children's performance at an annual inspection, introduced by Lowe in the 1860s and criticized for its deadening effect by Matthew Arnold.

Once state education was firmly established, however, its cultural level began to improve. Learning did not stop with the 'three Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic – and elementary teaching in subjects like history, English literature, geography and science was added, along with cookery and domestic science for girls. The extension of the vote to most working-class men in 1867 and 1884 created a new need to form patriotic citizens and instruct them in their civic duties. A more solid educational base also gave a new lease of life to autodidacticism, awakening intellectual interests that could be followed up in private reading, evening classes or the great variety of clubs and associations that promoted discussion and self-help: board schools 'provided a solid foundation for lifetime education. They taught basic learning skills, introduced the best in English literature, then set their pupils free at adolescence to read on their own' (Rose 2001: 162). The best that has been known and said was not the exclusive property of the elite, though as literacy expanded it had to compete with a new commercialized mass culture. What was still lacking was an organic connection between elementary schooling and the higher levels of education. By the end of the century, the image of a 'ladder' of opportunity reaching from the elementary school to the university was popular – both Huxley and Jowett thought in these terms – but little had been done to construct it. The key measure, scholarships to secondary schools for talented working-class children, was to be a twentieth-century achievement.

A SCHOOLED SOCIETY?

The British, according to Eric Hobsbawm, 'entered the twentieth century and the age of modern science and technology as a spectacularly ill-educated people' (Hobsbawm 1969: 169). Education of some kind now reached almost everyone, but it was often short and superficial. The skimpiness of elementary schooling contrasted with the lavish personal attention in cosseted surroundings received by the privileged students of Oxford and Cambridge. Yet even middle-class education was thinly spread, for at every social level family resources for full-time education were limited. In 1900, there were 20,249 students in British universities, of whom England accounted for 13,845, Wales for 1,253, Scotland for 5,151. Among the English students, 43 per cent were at Oxford and Cambridge, and another 29 per cent in the London colleges and medical schools. Women were 16 per cent of the British total, but unevenly distributed – 38 per cent in Wales, 14 per cent in Scotland, only nine per cent at Oxbridge. Not only was an 'Oxbridge–London axis' already in being, but the citadels of privilege were still overwhelmingly male (Howarth and Curthoys 1987: 210–11).

These figures meant that around one per cent of the age group received a university education (a bit less in England, rather more in Scotland). Even secondary schools had a limited impact – perhaps three per cent continued to the age of 17 or 18, when on a broader definition the middle classes comprised one-sixth of the population (Ringer 1979: 221, 229; Anderson 1991: 232–34; Bédarida 1991: 48). Middle-class children attended different schools from their working-class peers, but

left early to go into offices and businesses, if they were boys, or to prepare for marriage if they were girls. In many professions, including architecture, engineering, law (except for barristers) and accountancy, apprenticeship or ‘articles’ were still the norm; university training was chosen only by families with specific professions or careers in mind, rather than being essential, as it became in the late twentieth century, to middle-class status itself. Learning on the job and self-education in adult life remained common experiences, and institutional education did not monopolize the paths to social mobility and learning.

The Victorian period thus saw important steps towards a public system of education, but the process was limited by the stubborn individualism of a liberal society, and by a pluralism that remained suspicious of the state and preferred it to share authority over education with families, churches, local communities and autonomous universities. Nor was intellectual training seen as the only purpose of schooling. In a rapidly changing society, it was looked to as a way of preserving social cohesion and stability. In the early Victorian period, religion was emphasized for this purpose; by the end of the century schools were expected to train responsible citizens for democracy. Public schools and universities, for their part, assimilated new wealth to traditional values, admitted the new middle classes to a share in governing the state, and created an educated elite with a common national culture. These were not negligible achievements.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC
LENS

Graphs and the changing practices
of Victorian economists

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Harro Maas

Sir John Herschel was bent on relieving the discussion of double star obs[ervations] from the analytical difficulties attending a rigorous solution of equations, where the data are uncertain, irregular, and embarrassing. ‘The process’ said he, ‘by which I propose to accomplish this, is one essentially graphical; by which term I understand, not a mere substitution of geometrical construction and measurement for numerical calculation; but one which has for its object to perform that which no system of calculation can possibly do, by bringing in the aid of the eye & hand, to guide the judgment, in a case where judgment only, & not calculation can be of any avail’.

Stanley Jevons, notes related to the Statistical Atlas,
around 1861, JA6/6/133b

INTRODUCTION

Graphs were without any doubt one of the important innovations in political economy in late Victorian Britain. Present-day accounts emphasize their rhetorical persuasiveness, their capacity to immediately speak to the eye. We only need to open the pages of our daily newspapers to see at a glance the reaction of the oil prices on important events as the earthquake in Japan in early 2011, or the response of the stock exchanges to the international intervention in Libya. It is routinely assumed that the educated public is sufficiently graphically literate to interpret such graphs as picturing ‘real’ socio-economic events.

This photographic quality of graphs was emphasized by Victorian political economist William Stanley Jevons (1835–82) in a letter to his relative Richard Hutton as one of their great assets in uncovering the hidden laws of the ebb and flow of economic life – what we now call the business cycle. ‘My diagrams not only show the minutest details given in the tables, but also supersede the taking of averages, since the eye or mind of itself notices the *general course* of a set of numbers’ (Black and Könekamp 1973–82, 2: 450, letter of 1 September 1862). In contrast, at the end of the century political economists downplayed the

photographic quality of graphs in favour of their capacity to function as ‘great engines of scientific inquiry’, as Cambridge economist Alfred Marshall framed it in his contribution to the *Jubilee Issue* of the Statistical Society of London (1885) that was devoted to the method of graphs.

The theme of the *Jubilee Issue* was of itself remarkable. In the beginning of the 1860s Jevons had unsuccessfully tried to interest leading statisticians in his graphs and diagrams. As late as 1879 he muttered, in a comment on a presentation on the tabular method at the Statistical Society of London, that the English had ‘lost sight’ of the method of graphs after its spectacular introduction by William Playfair at the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, for most of the nineteenth century graphs did not make part of the regular toolkit of the political economist or social statistician. Only the last two decades saw a real explosion in their use. As Judy Klein (1997: 19) observes ‘one would be hard pressed to think of a key paper on time series statistics presented to the Royal Society or Royal Statistical Society from 1877 to 1927 that did not include a diagram as part of the analysis’.

In this chapter I will use the remarkable surge of the graphical method in economic statistics as a point of entry to investigate the change in research practices of political economists in the Victorian period. The use of graphs changed from providing representations of the economy to being instruments of investigation (Klein 1997: 18). But as we cannot take pictures of the economy, we must explain why it made sense to think of graphs as representations of the economy in the first place. How did the method of graphs function as a ‘photographic lens’ on society? To answer this question, I will start with a little excursion on John Ruskin and the early Pre-Raphaelite movement. I use this discussion to understand why graphs did not come into the purview of the political economist and social statistician before mid-nineteenth century. The central issue was what was meant by ‘exactness’ for the inexact science of political economy. We will then see how, once introduced, graphs changed from representations to instruments of discovery at the end of the Victorian period.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LENS

Photography itself was of course a new technology in the Victorian period. The history of its invention doesn’t concern us here, though it is important to note that in the early 1850s stereoscopic cameras had become available for a more general though not a mass consumer market. Stereoscopic reproduction attempted to compensate for the lack of perspective of photographs. Taking photographs was a time-consuming practice and as individuals had to freeze for quite some time to have their photographs taken, early portraits were criticized for their unnaturalness. Also the technical characteristics of the kinds of prints differed considerably. Daguerrotypes achieved a high degree of detail, as did albumen prints, in contrast to the technique of fixing developed by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1839–40. It is the exacting detail of early photographs that I am interested in as it taught Victorians to look differently at their world.

As has been recently argued, it was this photographic exactness that the Pre-Raphaelites learned to master when they followed John Ruskin’s advice to only paint ‘after nature’. Turner had found a visual language for giving an ‘entire



Figure 28.1 Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852–63. Oil on canvas $53\frac{15}{16} \times 77\frac{11}{16}$.
Courtesy of Manchester City Art Galleries

transcript of the whole system of nature’ that the Pre-Raphaelites could not reproduce. Instead Ruskin advised them to painstakingly observe nature, and to paint in the minutest details what they observed. Referring to William Bell Scott, the only Pre-Raphaelite who explicitly connected Pre-Raphaelitism and photography, Diana Waggoner argues convincingly that the belief in minute detail as the ‘emblem of visual truth’ was the central tenet of Pre-Raphaelitism and contemporary photographic practice (Waggoner 2010: 6–7). ‘Exactness’, wrote a critic in the *Athenaeum* for 12 January 1856, reflecting on the yearly exhibition of the Photographic Society, ‘is the tendency of the age’, and it was this exactness that the Pre-Raphaelites aimed at in their new visual language.

Of course this exactness could not be obtained with the same technical means as in a photograph. The time Ford Madox Brown invested in, for example, *Work*, his ‘social panorama of the significance of labour in Victorian culture’ (Barringer 2010: 29), is beyond comprehension. It took him 13 years to finish. But the level of detail reached is breathtaking and reminds us of Michelangelo Antonioni’s movie *Blow Up* where a murder is detected from enlarged photographs. We can read the name of Bobus Higgins who was standing in local elections on the orange posters in the distance just as we can see the details on the leaflet of the woman campaigning against drink at the left front of the painting. As in a photograph, this

level of detail was combined with a lack of visual perspective. The point is that such details would never have been visible by simply taking painting ‘after nature’ as a criterion. It needed the photographic lens as a standard to change what it meant to paint minute details. When Ruskin saw the result of his own advice in Ford Madox Brown’s *An English Autumn Afternoon*, he was shocked and asked him ‘why [he] chose such a very ugly subject for [his] last painting’, to which Brown responded ‘because it lay out of a back window’ and walked off (quoted in Barringer 2010: 29).

POLITICAL ECONOMY AS AN INEXACT SCIENCE

I use the comparison with photography and the Pre-Raphaelites to exemplify what I mean by the photographic lens. The Pre-Raphaelites reached realism in their paintings that hinged on the composition of the whole image from exacting details that were painted with minute attention. While Ruskin praised Turner for a visual language that captured the ‘underlying structures and processes’ of reality (Barringer 2010: 19), reality was now constructed as a composite of details. I want to use this change in visual language – in how realism was conceived – to study the shift in method in the same period in political economy.

Shortly after the critic mused in the *Athenaeum* that the tendency of the age was ‘exactness’, the Irish political economist John Elliot Cairnes (1823–75) published his lectures as Whately professor in political economy at Trinity College, Dublin. According to Cairnes political economy was anything but an exact science and of necessity excluded from the exactness that could be obtained in the other sciences, especially in astronomy and mechanics. Published in 1857 as *The Character and Logical Method of Political Economy*, Cairnes intended to strengthen the methodical lines that had been drawn in the sand by the towering economist of the Victorian age, John Stuart Mill. Early debates on the method of political economy focused on the relation of the inductive and the deductive method in social inquiry, where Cambridge men such as William Whewell, Richard Jones and Charles Babbage found themselves on opposite ends to the Oxford dons of the so-called Oriel Noetics, Edward Copleston, Nassau Senior and Richard Whately. Substantially these debates were about the inherent complexity of the social world (as compared to astronomy), the character of its subject matter, and the ensuing (im-)possibility of deriving laws of society from statistics (Corsi 1987, Goldman 1983, Maas 2005, 2011, Snyder 2006).

In his famous essay on the method and definition of political economy (1836) Mill defended the scientific character of political economy in a similar vein to the Oxford men, while trying to strike a balance with the Cambridge inductivists. Cleverly using Dugald Stewart’s distinction between the sciences of matter and mind, Mill staked out a separate domain of investigation for political economy. The political economist, Mill argued, relied on the laws of matter, but the study of these laws was not his interest. Neither did the political economist study society in its full complexity. If he did, he would be unable to formulate any general principles at all. According to Mill the political economist was able to shield his field from the complexity of society by limiting himself to the study of only a few

motives that related to man's striving for wealth: his aversion for labour and his time preference for immediate luxury consumption.

Mill emphasized that of consequence the laws of political economy were laws of mind. The truth of these laws rested neither on an act of faith, nor on mere conjecture, but as firmly on induction as the laws of matter. Not through an extensive induction from vast collections of statistical facts, but because every man could principally collect the materials of this knowledge within himself (Mill 1836 CW 4: 329). Using the Ricardian–Malthusian principles of population growth in a situation of land scarcity, the political economist was able to deduce laws that were true in the abstract, though in the concrete they only presented themselves as tendency laws, because of the many disturbing causes that obfuscated their working. Mill referred to this combined process of induction and deduction, which was a distinguishing feature of political economy, as the ‘a priori method’. It ensured that its laws were true with the same certainty as the truths of geometry (Mill 1836: 326).¹

THE ROLE OF STATISTICS

As a consequence statistics, the collection of facts, did not bear on the fundamental principles of the science. It could, of course, help explain why in practice the laws of political economy did not hold by uncovering the many disturbing causes. Yet this was no longer an issue for the science of political economy, which examined its abstract laws, but for the ‘art’ of economics, which was the domain of ‘practical philosophers’ and statesmen (De Marchi 2002, Hollander and Peart 1999, Hirsch 1992).

Mill's effort to strike a balance between the Cambridge and Oxford men, between an inductive and a deductive approach to the subject, had practical consequences for the relation of political economy to statistics that were visible in the way both developed into separate fields without much mutual benefit. Even though a political economist like Nassau Senior was a founding member of the Statistical Society of London, his address to that society just weeks before the meeting of the International Statistical Congress in London in July 1860 intentionally downgraded the scientific merits of statistics, and reaffirmed that the investigations of political economists into the fundamental structure of commercial society were independent of the fact-finding activities of statisticians. Political economy was an inexact science, but its laws were nevertheless valid with mathematical certainty. The confusion between numerical and mathematical certainty goes on until today, making some commentators believe Mill was arguing for numerical exactness in political economy, while he nowhere says so. Mary Poovey (1998: 324) even turns Mill into an ‘enthusiast for statistics’, whereas it is only in the editions from the 1860s of the *Principles of Political Economy* (first edition 1848) that we find the possible positive contribution of statistics to political economy mentioned. A bit late for an enthusiast. The distinction between numerical and mathematical exactness will play an important role in this chapter.

John Elliot Cairnes basically defended Mill's position in his well-received lectures on political economy's method of 1857. Astronomers and physicists were able to give numerical precision to their laws, but this was impossible for the

political economist. Cairnes used a small table of changes in prices and quantities of wheat that had been discussed by various authors all through the century (for example by Whewell and the statistician Thomas Tooke) to show in detail why this was so.

This example went back to political arithmeticians Gregory King and Charles Davenant. Whewell, in particular, had suggested various mathematical formulae to fit to this table, but Cairnes argued that such an exercise missed the many disturbing causes hidden in the data. Changing prices affected individuals of different wealth differently, to name just one factor, and such factors were misleadingly concealed in a numerical formula. The business of the economist was not to search for numerical formulae fitting statistical data, his work was ‘done’ once he had traced economic events to motives of action.

TABLES, MAPS, GRAPHS AND ERRORS

So where does this leave the graphical method? Nowhere. At least not with respect to political economy. The separate route to truth formulated by Mill and strengthened by Cairnes by mid century separated political economy from statistics. This meant that innovations within statistics, such as the use of graphs, simply did not come within the purview of the political economist. In 1863, when Stanley Jevons sent Cairnes a brochure he had written on the influence of the gold discoveries in California and Australia halfway through the century, Cairnes responded with genuine surprise.

Jevons’s small tract contained a great many statistical innovations: a logarithmic chart picturing the price of 39 individual commodities against a base period, an

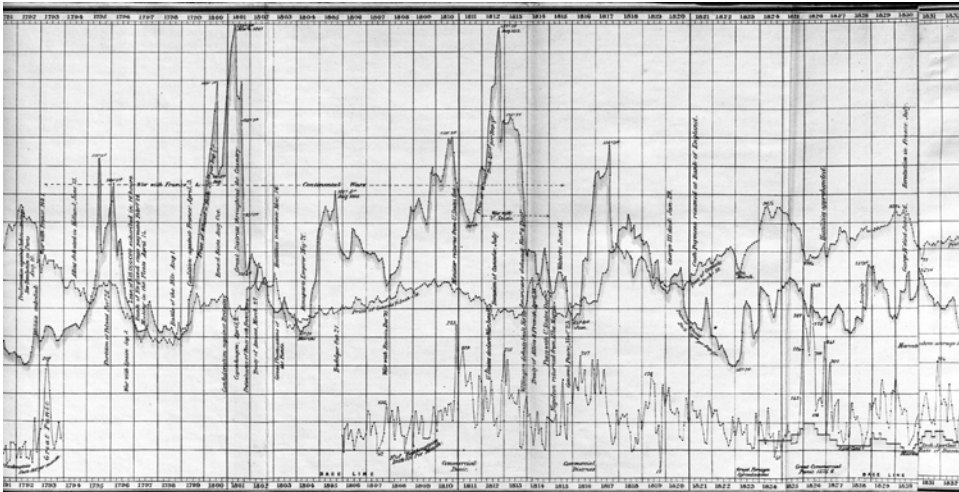


Figure 28.2 Fragment of diagram showing the price of English funds, the price of wheat, the price of bankruptcies, and the rate of discount monthly since 1731. Reprinted (as a folded chart at the back of the book) in *Investigations in Currency and Finance*, Macmillan 1884. Courtesy Palgrave/Macmillan publishers

index number representing the average price, graphs representing the movements of the average (and individual commodity prices) over time. These were all sufficient innovations to revolutionize a field, and in fact all the instruments mentioned developed into subdisciplines within mathematical statistics. Not so then. Cairnes, 12 years Jevons's senior, had himself written on the 'gold question' from an 'a priori' perspective and was pleasantly surprised that Jevons, using such 'entirely distinct methods of inquiry' had independently reached the same conclusions. But in correspondence Cairnes brushed over these differences in method and zoomed in on the details Jevons gave on his private experiences while in Australia as gold assayer of the newly established Mint.

The testimony which you bear to the coincidence of my speculations on the local effects of the gold discoveries with your experience in Australia is very valuable: perhaps I might make bold to say – considering that they were the speculations of one who had never visited that country – that it adds something to our grounds for confidence in the essential soundness of economic science as it is cultivated in the u.kingdom [sic].

(Black and Könekamp 1972–81, 3: 22–23)

Jevons did not think of political economy as an 'essentially sound' science. But his methodological innovations did not resonate with the political economist nor with the social statistician. The preferred method of the political economist was a speculative search for causes. The preferred method of statisticians in the domain of social and economic investigation was the so-called tabular method: the expression of exact numerical results in tables, not graphs or index-numbers.

The exceptions were the explicitly inductive and closely related sciences like meteorology, tidology, or astronomy that needed the synthetic work of graphs to marshal the vast amount of data they were confronted with to flesh out the phenomena of their interest in the first place. It is no coincidence that Stanley Jevons used the quotation of the towering astronomer of the Victorian period John Herschel, which heads this essay, to structure his thoughts on how to use the method of graphs while working on his Statistical Atlas project, a project started at the beginning of the 1860s to construct some 39 statistical diagrams for the use of businessmen. The title of Jevons's project clearly referred to the innovative work of William Playfair nearly a century earlier. But note that Herschel used this method not for its numerical exactness, but to overcome situations where the data were 'uncertain, irregular, and embarrassing'.

William Playfair

Embarrassment is unfortunately the word that comes to mind when thinking how contemporaries looked at William Playfair's haphazard career, first as a draughtsman to James Watt, and then as a journalist and speculative entrepreneur who travelled through Europe and tried to live from his pen and dubious financial schemes. Though there is no valid inference from someone's personal (financial) behaviour to their accomplishments – after all, who cares about Mozart's diaries when listening to *Così fan Tutte*? – this inference *was* made in Playfair's case, and

with some justice, even though today Playfair is predominantly remembered for his innovative graphs (Funkhauser 1938, Hankins 1999, Klein 1997, Playfair 2005).

When he sent a draft of his now famous *Commercial and Statistical Atlas* (first published 1786) to James Watt for comments, Watt cautioned him to include the original tables from which the graphs were constructed ‘for the charts now seem to rest on your own authority, and it will naturally be enquired from whence you have derived your intelligence’ (quoted in Playfair 2005: 14, letter of 10 October 1785 to Playfair). From the third edition of the *Atlas* tables were omitted.

Despite being spectacularly innovative, Playfair’s charts had many flaws. The lines were drawn incautiously, missing data were added in an off-hand way, the quality of the engravings showed lack of skill. But Playfair was remarkably cavalier about the exactness of his graphs, emphasizing time and again that the virtue of the graphs was that they presented ‘to the eye’ a ‘permanent idea of the gradual progress and comparative amount’ of the numbers from which they were composed, even though there might be ‘some deception’ in the diagrams. Thus, his hazardous financial schemes and deceptive graphs coagulated into one verdict on his life, voiced in an obituary in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* after his death in 1823.

Had Mr. Playfair cultivated his mechanical genius, there is no doubt he would not only have obtained considerable eminence, but have rendered no inconsiderable service to this country. Unhappily, however, for his own interests, he had the ambition to become an author.

(quoted in Playfair 2005: 9)

Tables

In early Victorian Britain neither statisticians nor political economists chose to follow Playfair’s hazy path.² The mission statement of the Statistical Society of London mentioned that the society was to collect numerical facts to be listed in tabular form. Despite Dickens’s merciless caricature of statisticians filling up the tables for the bluebooks (Porter 2011: 289), numbers and tables became the means of expression of the sagacious statistician. Political economists like Nassau Senior were involved in the establishment of the London and provincial statistical societies (Hilts 1981), but hardly contributed to the meetings.

This lack of interest is partly explained by the methodological high ground on which political economists considered themselves to stand, so that practical statistical information had nothing to add to their principles. They preferred to hear the hard-won results of door-to-door questionnaires in their seats as members of the poor law committee (Nassau Senior) or parliament (Mill). Even the Cambridge propagators of inductive economics made little practical efforts to advance its cause. Richard Jones was too busy with the committee for the revision of the tithes or found another excuse, William Whewell with his *History and Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1837 and 1840 respectively). Charles Babbage, who had the clearest sense of the need for statistics for the advancement of political economy and – more importantly – the world of business, was increasingly obsessed with his doomed calculating machines.

It was only due to the persistence of government administrators, most of them with a medical background, like George Porter, William Farr, and William Guy, that the London Statistical Society survived. The involvement of medical men and social improvers meant that the inquiries of the Statistical Society of London followed the interests of the provincial statistical societies, and were directed to questions of vital statistics, social hygienics, education, and the condition of the poor.³ Only in the mid 1850s did the number of articles on subjects related to political economy start to rise in the statistics journals.

While political economists deduced their laws from motives of action, statisticians reasoned with tables. Tables were considered a reliable instrument for extracting causal factors in concrete cases. As Stephen Turner (1997) explains, statisticians ingeniously combined and compared tables to decompose contributing causes into the 'true' set of causal factors (the 'net effects') that produced the recorded results. Though this hunting for causes from tables did not always lead to acceptable results (Turner 1997 shows how Farr's use of the method in the case of the Cholera epidemic of 1848–49 was 'dead wrong'), this did not affect trust in tables as the most accurate way to record statistical data.

Maps

As recently argued by Katharine Anderson (2005) there were also limits of another kind to tabular statistics. For sciences like meteorology and tidology, tables of numbers lacked the appropriate dimensions to picture the phenomena of interest. For these sciences, maps gave shape to phenomena. The experience of the weather was a local thing, and tied to local knowledge and practices. To turn this local knowledge into a general understanding of atmospheric phenomena meant, as Anderson shows, to turn particular data into general phenomena. This also meant to tie individual observers and their observations into a global network that resulted in a collective observation, something that became a technical possibility by the invention of the telegraph.

A good example is Alexander von Humboldt's map of isotherms, lines of equal temperature, that by 1850 had become the standard reference point in theories about the causes of depressions, but we may also think of cotidal maps that similarly united individual observations into a global picture of the tides, and of isobar maps that united geographic points of similar barometric pressure. As Anderson (2005: 191) puts it, 'maps gave a two-dimensional presence to what were often invisible forces or undefined space like the atmosphere or ocean'. Playfair had praised his diagrams as 'giving form and shape to a number of separate ideas, which are otherwise abstract and unconnected' (Playfair 2005: 30), and it is in similar terms that Victorians perceived the merits of meteorological maps. They gave, as Anderson (2005: 171) notes, quoting a distinct Victorian phrase, 'meaning at a glance' to phenomena that were beyond the reach of the individual observer.

Errors and graphs

Maps united individual observations into a unified whole and so created a phenomenon that otherwise could not be seen. This differed from the relation

between individual observations to averages, where averages were considered to wash out individual errors in observation and so to constitute a phenomenon that was more true than the individual observations themselves. But graphs could fulfil the same function. In his *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (first published 1840) William Whewell had made exactly this claim. His list of examples ranged from the data on prices and quantities of grain, via tidology, to William Herschel's use of the graphical method in his observations of double stars. Quoting John Herschel, Whewell emphasized that in searching a relation between two variables a graph, when drawn 'with a bold but careful hand', might wash out individual observational errors and thus bring out this relation more truly than a line connecting the individual observations themselves ([1847] 1967: 399). Graphs could thus suggest the functional form of the relation between two variables that could not be gathered from individual data. For Whewell, there was a smooth transition from data to graphs to mathematics in disciplines ranging from astronomy to political economy. But Whewell's *Philosophy* was quickly eclipsed by John Stuart Mill's *Logic* (1843), which was especially praised for its separate attention to the 'moral sciences',

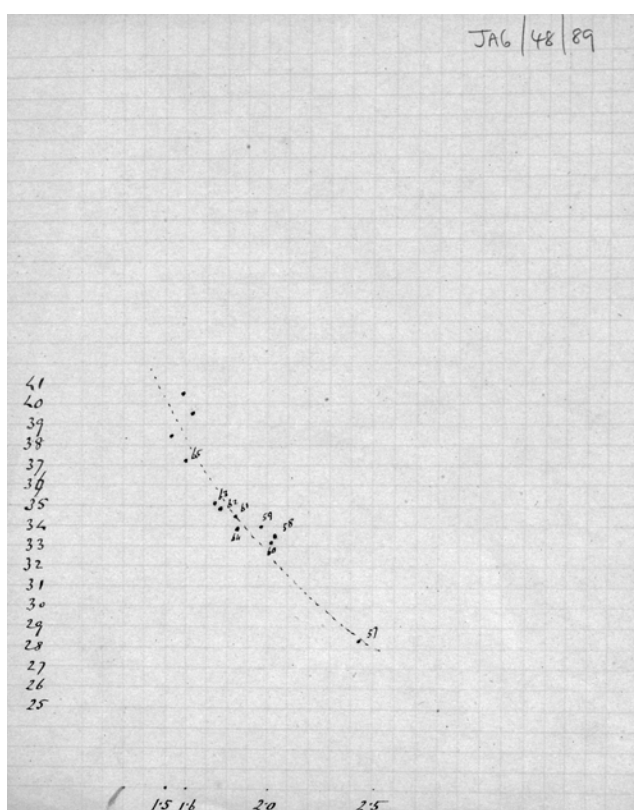


Figure 28.3 Alleged price–quantity graph of William Stanley Jevons. Jevons archive, item JA/48/89. Reproduced by courtesy of the John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester

including political economy, and which made exploration of the use of maps and graphs in political economy obsolete. This changed, though slowly, with the work of William Stanley Jevons.

SCIENCE AT THE ANTIPODES

The protagonist of the following two sections of this chapter was an amateur photographer and meteorologist who turned his attention to political economy and social statistics. These interests made him receptive to the need for exacting detail and the potential for synthetic representations of large masses of data. Stanley Jevons was born into a middle-class Unitarian family in Liverpool. He studied experimental philosophy and chemistry at University College London in the early 1850s, and after his bachelors degree accepted the offer of the well-paid position of gold assayer at the newly established Mint in Sydney. There is general agreement in the secondary literature that Jevons turned his attention to political economy during his years in Australia, though the relation of his statistical work to his mathematically garbed theory of the utility maximizing agent is still a matter of dispute. Here I will concentrate on his statistical endeavours as these by themselves were sufficiently innovative to change the nature of political economy.

The Sydney Mint was a typical colonial institute. Its deputy master, Captain Edward Ward, encouraged his employees to pursue their scientific interests, and they actively participated in the literary and philosophical societies that gathered around

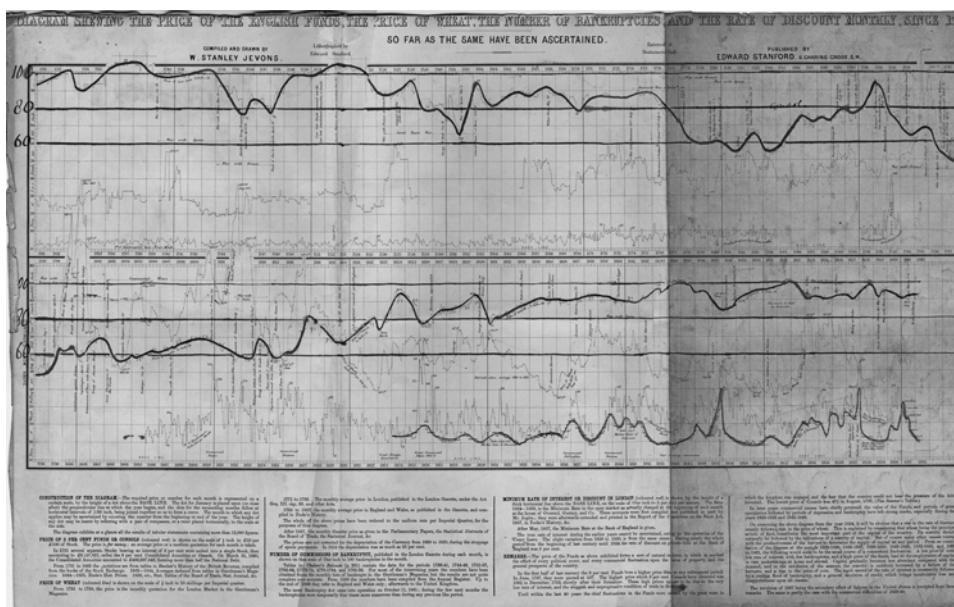


Figure 28.4 Marshall's drawing of stylized graphs on Stanley Jevons's original diagram for the *Statistical Atlas* published in 1862. Marshall used the diagram in teaching at University College, Bristol in 1881–82. Marshall archives identity code Marshall 7/3/1. Reproduced by kind permission of the Marshall Library of Economics, University of Cambridge

the Mint. The Mint itself could best be compared to a factory. The coining was driven by steam, and to check the quality of the coin there was a separate department with special purpose balances that eventually would be automated at the end of Jevons's stay in Australia. His job as a gold assayer gave him access to chemicals that were necessary for his photographs and that he also used for experiments on the formation of clouds. Making observations on the Australian weather was part of his daily routine. Like his colleagues, Jevons presented his scientific endeavours to the local literary and philosophical societies. On a small scale Sydney mimicked the intellectual and scientific life of British cities (White 2006).

Stemming from Liverpool, Jevons's attitude to social inquiry was rather that of the enthusiasts of the local statistical societies in Lancashire than of the London political economists who convened once a month for discussion and dinner at the Political Economy Club. His broad interests along the scientific spectrum made him explore different representations of his findings: engravings after photographs, maps, diagrams and tables.

THE STATISTICAL ATLAS

Shortly after his return to England to study political economy at University College London, Jevons outlined a plan for a major statistical project, his *Statistical Atlas*. His aim was to produce some 39 statistical plates that taken together would give an impression of the history and current state of social and economic conditions of England. Jevons planned his plates 'for the use of the businessmen'. As already suggested, the name of the project clearly refers to William Playfair's *Commercial and Political Atlas*, but also to other atlases produced at the time. Jevons ardently collected materials on such other projects. In his notebooks, we find, for example, a reference to Luke Howard's spectacular *Barometrographia* of 1845, a collection of coloured readings of his barometer at Tottenham. Each separate plate pictured barometer readings for a whole year. The readings were made with an automatic recording device and printed in circular form in combination with the lunar cycles. At the time Howard's plates went largely unnoticed, perhaps because the whole layout of the graphs was too lunarist, perhaps because of mistrust of the automatic instrument used, but most likely because Howard's plates did not accomplish what meteorological maps did, to turn particular observations into a general observation.⁴

Did idiosyncrasy and usefulness also matter for Jevons's plates? In the letter to his relative Richard Hutton, Jevons brushed aside the first issue: 'My diagrams not only show the minutest details given in the tables, but also supersede the taking of averages, since the eye or mind of itself notices the *general course* of a set of numbers' (Black and Könekamp 1973–82, 2: 450, letter of 1 September 1862). But what about the second, the use that could be made of it? When Jevons presented his plates to William Newmarch, a Yorkshire businessman, prominent statistician and member of the Royal Society, he looked without saying a word of comprehension. If anyone was the target audience, it was Newmarch. So even if we grant that Jevons's plates produced a general observation, nothing followed for their use.

Jevons published at his own expense with Edward Stanford at Charing Cross in 1862 (see [Figure 28.2](#)). The chart shows the course of English funds, the

(nominal) price of wheat, the number of bankruptcies and the monthly discount rate of the Bank of England. The lines are drawn with painstaking accuracy. The readings of the values of the dots on the vertical axis are remarkably close to their table values. In addition Jevons marked important historical events such as the Napoleonic Wars vertically in the diagram.

The result is a diagram that is built up from particulars and does present us with an image of the history and current state of the British economy. But did it add up to a general observation or merely present minute details without perspective? Ruskin was shocked when he looked at Ford Madox Brown's *English Autumn Afternoon* because of the unassuming landscape painted, but perhaps also because he fully realized that merely painting the minute details of nature did not, as in Turner's work, add up to anything significant. 'Rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing, believing all things to be right and good', did not lead to 'rejoicing in the truth' (Waggoner 2010: 3, quoting Ruskin). Where Turner, with his visual language, was able to express 'underlying structures and processes . . . an entire transcript of the whole system of nature' (Barringer 2010: 19, quoting Ruskin), we may ask whether Jevons captured the 'underlying structures and processes' of the British economy with his diagrams.

We don't have any record of William Newmarch's reaction to Jevons's diagram other than Jevons's own disappointed remark in his diary. The positive reviews in the press can hardly be trusted as they were written by people close to Jevons, like Richard Hutton. But we can at least imagine that one reflex of the mature statistician Newmarch was to ask why abandon the exact representation of numbers in tables, if he had the established methods to hunt for the underlying structures and processes buried in them. And for the political economist prose rather than graphs expressed the true causes of the ebb and flow of economic life. Here's an example of what John Stuart Mill has to say on commercial crises in his *Principles*:

There is said to be a commercial crisis, when a great number of merchants and traders at once, either have, or apprehend that they shall have, a difficulty in meeting their engagements. The most usual cause of this general embarrassment, is the recoil of prices after they have been raised by a spirit of speculation, intense in degree, and extending to many commodities. . . . In this manner, in the celebrated speculative year 1825, and at various other periods during the present century, the prices of many of the articles of the principal articles of commerce rose greatly, without any fall in others, so that general prices might, without incorrectness, be said to have risen. When after such a rise, the reaction comes, and prices begin to fall . . . they fall as much below the usual level as during the previous period of speculation they have risen above it: the fall as well as the rise, originating not in anything affecting money, but in the state of credit.

(Mill 1848, 3: ch.12 §3)

In a sense Jevons's graph was as much a provocation to the statistician and political economist as Ford Madox Brown's English landscape to Ruskin. Both were composites of particulars. That may do for a work of art (it didn't for Ruskin),

but not so for science. Rather than presenting a general observation Jevons's graphs were 'heaping' statistical materials together; it was unclear how to make an inference to the 'underlying structure' of the economy as could be done (with all difficulties) for isobar maps. It was only when graphs stopped being photographs, that they became useful instruments for the statistician and the economist.

ENGINES OF DISCOVERY

This transition was formulated explicitly and vigorously pursued by the Cambridge economist Alfred Marshall, whose *Principles of Economics* (1890) would replace Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) as the economists' book of reference (note the omission of 'political' from Marshall's title). In his contribution to the *Jubilee Issue* of the *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Marshall cautioned against those who saw the great merit of graphs in 'enabling the eye to take in at once a long series of facts' (1885: 251). If we were only to look at one series of facts 'accuracy is of far more importance than ease and rapidity of presentation', and a table served this purpose better than a graph (Marshall 1885: 251). Marshall saw the 'special function' of the graphical method in enabling the swift comparison of 'different sets of statistics', and for this purpose he proposed the development of a book of (standardized) graphs on a great many subjects. Leafing through the book unexpected comparisons would strike the eye. Thus, graphs would start functioning as 'great engines of scientific inquiry' and not only as representations of sets of numbers.

Marshall singled out 'historical graphs', what we would now call time-series graphs, for a more detailed discussion. Comparing the general movements of these curves to one another could suggest common causes producing these movements. Marshall also suggested that focusing on general movements brought economics closer to geometry and so to the rigour of mathematics.⁵ Interestingly, Marshall invoked a concept that he had developed for another kind of graph to exemplify how one might go about in these comparisons: elasticities.

Elasticities show the relative changes of two variables against one another. The great advantage of elasticities in economics is that they are relative, and so independent of the units of measurement. Thus, elasticities for the reaction of different commodities to price changes can be readily compared. Marshall was the first to explore the possibilities of this concept in economics. He did so, as my explanation already indicates, for the diagram that is named after him: the supply and demand cross – the Marshallian cross diagram (see Humphrey 1992). This diagram pictures supply and demand not against time, but against prices and is, in Judy Klein's terms, a diagram in logical rather than historical space (Klein 1995, 1997). It lifts out a relation from history and puts it in a space that implies a strict causal connection between two variables.⁶ In Marshall's work, these diagrams are highly stylized; they show a general relation, rather than a dot-for-dot connection where the dots are individual (historic) observations.

Marshall easily and knowledgeably travelled between these two modes of representation, between what he elsewhere called 'fact-curves' and 'law-curves'. What Marshall realized was that economics had to become less exact to become

more rigorous. Once the economist distanced himself from the exact numerical figures in the tables, and used graphs just like Playfair had done, to bring out the general movement of the curves, he was able to bring in the rigour of mathematics to approach his field. This was exactly the point made by Marshall's contemporary, the Oxford economist Francis Ysidro Edgeworth, in a comment of 1925 on his Oxford tutor, the Greek professor and master of Balliol College, Benjamin Jowett (1817–93):

Jowett, for instance, as I can testify, much as he liked Marshall, disliked his mathematical apparatus. The authority of Jowett on the question of method was indeed not particularly great, for he had not realized that the use of curves and symbols does not imply the use of exact calculation. But Jowett was representative of cultivated opinion.

(quoted in Barbé 2010: 57)

This opinion was cultivated amongst political economists and statisticians. The profound confusion in John Elliot Cairnes's lectures on the method of political economy was that mathematical and numerical exactness were one and the same thing. This suggested that there was no common ground between political economists and statisticians in their search for the underlying structure of the economy; statisticians used tables to hunt for causes that had local validity, whereas political economists concentrated on the global principles that were found in the economist's mind. Statisticians cherished the exactness of their tables, while political economists vaunted the inexact, yet lawlike character of their science.

Jevons's gold study shows that he did not stop in making photographs of the economy. Rather, he followed the path that is implied in Marshall's contribution for the jubilee issue. In his statistical studies in the 1860s and 1870s he transformed, for example, original data by taking moving averages in his attempts to trace business cycles back to the regular changes in the sun's activity (his sunspot studies). Or he compared monthly and quarterly averages from 1845 to 1861 of the rate of discount, bankruptcies and other variables to show that the high rate of discount in October and November was the cause of 'a periodic tendency of commercial distress and difficulty' during these months, indicating consequences for the monetary policy of the Bank of England (Klein 1997: 109–12). His *Theory of Political Economy* of 1871 included a discussion of Davenant's small table of prices and quantities and wheat to show that it *was* possible to render human motives in mathematical form, not by connecting individual data, but by describing the structure behind them.

That is why the following diagram is so important to understand the fundamental change in the tools of expression of economists at the end of the nineteenth century (see [Figure 28.3](#)). The diagram most likely shows quantities of a commodity on the vertical and prices on the horizontal axis. The numbers to the dots indicate years. It is not clear what commodity Jevons was looking at. But it is clear that he was following Whewell's lead. By abstaining from connecting the individual dots, Jevons aimed at a functional relation that was 'more true' than the individual data themselves.

Marshall understood this. In his notebooks we find diagrams and graphs in which he showed himself Jevons's apprentice.⁷ He used Jevons's numbers to experiment with different graphical representations. The most spectacular is perhaps his own effort to break with the exactness of Jevons's diagrams and to present a perspective on the data (see [Figure 28.4](#)). With bold strokes Marshall drew lines in red between which the numerical values mainly moved. He then drew the general movement of the curves, thus taking distance from Jevon's exact plottings. If Jevons's diagrams had been a work of art, this would have been an act of vandalism. Now, it showed the emergence of a new language, in which statistics, graphs and mathematics moved together to become the standard means of expression of the economist.

CODA

In 1922 John Maynard Keynes was asked by the *Guardian* to be the guest editor for the special supplement charting the results of the recovery efforts after the Great War. Shortly before the Harvard Economic and Statistical Service had launched their famous business barometer, consisting of three graphs, for the stock exchange, real production, and the money market, leapfrogging one another. Keynes was extremely taken with the Harvard barometer, and asked the LSE statistician Arthur Bowley to get the statistical bureaus of Europe interested in producing a similar vivid representation for their economies. As it happened, this proved all much more complex than initially expected and stimulated a very different development, that of the first econometric model of a national economy, made by the first Nobel Laureate in economics, the Dutchman Jan Tinbergen. When Keynes realized that Tinbergen's business cycle study for the League of Nations (1939) was the fruit of his own request to open Pandora's box, he shivered in horror: Tinbergen's model was 'a nightmare to live by'.

But it was too late. The emergence of econometrics of course cannot be reduced to the change in the Victorian landscape at the end of the nineteenth century (Morgan 1990), but there still is something inevitable in the changing discourse of political economists that remained only invisible because Marshall buried his mathematics in footnotes and appendices. Once economists realized statistics could be fruitfully used for discovery in economics by becoming less, not more, exact, mathematics became the tool of preference to reason on the structure of the economy. Graphs fulfilled a mediating role. In a letter of 28 February 1879 Jevons thanked Henry Sidgwick for sending him Marshall's paper on international trade, in which graphical analysis played a pivotal role. Jevons wrote:

I notice that you speak of the method of diagrams as being *opposed* to that of symbols, whereas I should not attribute this meaning to Marshall's remarks. I should prefer to say that if not ultimately the same methods they are parallel methods, the difference being one of convenience of apprehension.

(quoted in Maas 2005: 241)

At the turn of the century, the rigour of mathematics replaced the exactness of statistical tables in Victorian economics. Graphs and mathematics gave economists a new lens on society.

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NOTES

- 1 I thank Floris Heukelom for pointing me to this passage.
- 2 William Whewell was an ardent collector of economic and statistical tracts, which he sent to his friend Richard Jones to help him write his anti-Ricardian book on political economy. In his own register of books and tracts at the Wren library, Trinity College Cambridge, none of Playfair’s books is listed. Playfair received unspecified praise for his contribution to statistics in the first volume of the *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*.
- 3 For histories of British statistical societies, see Cullen (1975) and Hilts (1981). There is a wealth of literature on the rise of statistical thinking in Britain. See e.g. Porter (1986).
- 4 I thank Katharine Anderson for providing information on the reception of Luke Howard’s plates.
- 5 The notion of ‘rigour’ in economics is highly contested and has a history. See Boumans (2001) and Weintraub (2002).
- 6 As Mary Morgan (1997) explains, time series graph comparisons can be thought of in terms of sets of common causes working on (e.g.) two variables depicted against time. This notion of common causes disappears once moving to a graph in logical space, where there is a unique functional relation between these two variables.
- 7 I am indebted to Hsiang-Ke Chao for sharing this graph with me. See Groenewegen (1995: 288).

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE ANTINOMIES OF SAGE CULTURE



William Whyte

One of the surprise sensations of 1877 was W. H. Mallock's *The New Republic*. Naturally, it could not compete in sales with the year's runaway success, *Black Beauty*, but it nonetheless established its author as a name to be reckoned with. It was an unlikely hit, written by a man only a couple of years out of university and concerning a country house party in which the characters engage in a symposium on culture, faith, and philosophy. The appeal of the book lay in its witty and wicked satires on the leading thinkers of the day. John Ruskin, Thomas Huxley, Benjamin Jowett, Walter Pater: all the sages of the age were there. Mallock mocked their attitudes and criticized their morals. He even produced strikingly effective pastiches of their work – guying everything from Matthew Arnold's poetry to the rodomontade of Thomas Carlyle. *The New Republic* thus provides a wonderful introduction to the intellectual life of the Victorian world. More importantly, it illustrates some of the key issues faced by the thinkers themselves. For Mallock's targets were cleverly chosen. They were not only amongst the most prominent intellectuals of the day; they were also people who had – often very publicly – reflected on the role of the intellectual in the nineteenth century.

The shrewdness of Mallock's attack was revealed by the fact that it coincided with the attempt by one of the leading periodicals of the period to achieve exactly what he satirized. From April and May 1877 onwards, the *Nineteenth Century* published a series of letters under the heading 'A Modern Symposium'. They were a debate on the nature of faith, morality, and modern thought more generally. Intended to recreate the atmosphere of a relaxed intellectual gathering, these articles also served to confirm the plausibility of *The New Republic*. Indeed, two of the *Nineteenth Century*'s contributors – T. H. Huxley and W. K. Clifford – were amongst the characters that the book attacked. Even without this contemporaneous confirmation, however, Mallock's words were almost certain to have hit home. For the world he discussed was already familiar to his readers. *The New Republic* described a self-important intellectual class: 'celebrities', who believed themselves to be exemplars of their time; 'a perfect aristocracy – an aristocracy in the true and genuine sense of the word'. Yet it also exposed the hollowness of these claims. The Greek epigram on the title page read: 'All is laughter, all is dust, all is

nothingness, for all the things that arise out of the unreasonable'. Abstract thought, Mallock argued, is simply not enough. Moreover, the book goes on to show that the pretensions of the thinkers themselves are self-deluding. It concludes that there is 'no earnest thinking class' in Victorian Britain (Mallock 1877: 24, 66, 208, 115).

Acknowledging this paradox is crucial for an understanding of the Victorian intellectual. In the first place, *The New Republic* can be read as an indictment of these individuals: evidence of their frivolous and self-indulgent detachment from the real problems and real people of the world around them. Yet, by standing in judgement on these thinkers, by prefacing his judgement with a classical quotation, and by self-consciously modelling his work on classical examples, Mallock revealed his own desire to be taken seriously as an intellectual himself. More strikingly still, whilst *The New Republic* appears to argue that intellectuals are essentially unimportant, this contention is undercut by the popularity of the novel itself. There clearly was a public that was not only interested in intellectuals, but was sufficiently interested – and knowledgeable – to want to read and to be able to enjoy a book whose chief appeal was its author's knowing tone and capacity to provide pastiches of the leading thinkers of the day. What *The New Republic* reveals, in other words, is a culture in which intellectuals were condemned for their pretensions yet also doubtful about their impact.

If the Victorians were confused about the place of intellectuals within their own society, then this is nothing compared to the doubts and debates that have beset subsequent writers. For some, this is the age in which the idea of the modern intellectual – and perhaps even the word intellectual itself – was created (Heyck 1982: 13–21; Annan 1955). For others, the nineteenth century was the era in which intellectuals as a social force declined and died (Gross 1992; Mauriello 2001). For still others, it is all but impossible to determine whether there were intellectuals and, if so, what their role amounted to (Allen 1986). Yet others are completely convinced that Britain has never produced anything like a class of intellectuals at all (Hickox 1986; McKibbin 1990: 33). The discussion has hinged on the question of the context in which nineteenth-century writers and thinkers operated. There is general agreement that the late-Victorian period, in particular, witnessed a significant shift as the increasing professionalization of academic life led to the creation of distinctive academic disciplines. This specialization is seen by some writers as a crisis: a collapse in the 'common intellectual context' that had sustained the world of thought – and the life of the intellectual – up until that point (Young 1985: [Chapter 5](#)). But other writers see quite the reverse, arguing that it was precisely this process that created the modern intellectual; making the third quarter of the nineteenth century 'the heyday of the British intellectuals' (Stapleton 2001: 12).

By returning to the work of contemporaries like Mallock, this chapter will seek to show that there was indeed a group of Victorians that we can confidently call intellectuals. More than this, it will argue that the intellectual was a product of the Victorian world: the consequence of changes in society, technology, discourse and culture. Far from witnessing the death of the intellectual, then, the nineteenth century saw its birth. At the same time, however, it is necessary to point out the problems faced by Victorian thinkers. Indeed, the very forces that had brought

them into being also threatened to drive them out of existence – or, at least that was the fear at the time. Those writers who have painted a rather more pessimistic picture are, in that sense, right to have picked up on the permanent sense of crisis that intellectuals felt throughout the Victorian era. W. H. Mallock is consequently archetypal: an intellectual who doubted both the morality and the importance of intellectuals; a writer who wrote about the futility of writing; and a thinker who was eloquent on the problem of thought.

Before beginning any such exploration, of course, we need to know what we are looking for. Definitions of the intellectual are as varied as those who write on them. The tendency of writers on the Victorian period to use terms like Men of Letters, Sages, and Public Moralists rather than Intellectuals only makes matters worse. Many scholars now contrast Men of Letters with the intellectual, with the former seen as urbane, widely cultured, and widely read; and the latter depicted as narrow, parochial, and over specialized. Sages are often depicted as latter-day prophets, deriving their authority from a quasi-biblical style and a pseudo-religious posture. Intellectuals and Men of Letters, in comparison, can seem somewhat dry. The Public Moralist, by contrast, is a term that apparently describes a much more restrained and respectable figure: a gentleman who was widely recognized not just for narrow knowledge but also for his expertise in the ethical issues of the day. The truth is that these ostensibly different categories do, in fact, overlap. The Sages of one book are the Men of Letters in another; the Public Moralists in a third. They are all intellectuals – in Stefan Collini's words, they are all 'marked out in the business of articulating reflections on human activities and exercising some kind cultural authority acknowledged by the attentions of wider society' (Collini 1991: 28).

As *The New Republic* makes plain, this idea of the intellectual was not new. Mallock mentions Ancient Greece as a model, but one might equally cite the Middle Ages or the Enlightenment as exemplars. The notion of a separate class or group of thinkers is implicit in such classics as Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1509), for example. Yet the Victorians were right to see their age as one in which this group of individuals was larger and more important than ever before. Collini has recently argued that there are three definitions of the word intellectual. First, there is the intellectual as sociological category. Then there is what he calls the 'subjective sense', which captures an individual's own commitment to serious-minded and sustained thought. Finally, there is the 'cultural sense': the idea of the intellectual as an authority speaking to a wider public, making pronouncements on matters of cultural importance. For Collini, only the third – cultural – definition is of any analytical value (Collini 2006: 46–48). But this is surely mistaken, and is especially unhelpful for students of the Victorian world. Not only do the sociological and subjective senses of the word illuminate our understanding of the nineteenth-century intellectual. This period was also one in which they were reshaped just as much as the cultural sense of the term. Indeed, it saw the creation of a sage culture: precisely the sort of social group, made up of serious-minded intellectuals, that Collini's approach might overlook.

This is an important point. The difference between the world of the nineteenth-century intellectuals and the thinkers who had gone before them was as much about social and economic change as it was about the history of thought. Put crudely,

what distinguished writers of the Renaissance from writers in this period was money and numbers. It was money, because this era was the first in which more than a handful of individuals could survive on their income as authors, lecturers, and thinkers. And it was numbers, because what underwrote this lifestyle was the large increase in those willing to pay authors, lecturers, and thinkers. In 1855 the third and fourth volumes of Macaulay's *History* sold more than 25,000 copies on the day of publication (Altick 1954: 7). In 1860, the Cornhill magazine sold 100,000 copies of its first issue (Sutherland 1986). In 1869 the journal *Nature* estimated that at least 45,000 people were members of scientific societies alone (Levi 1869). Such was the demand for public lectures that even apparently *recherché* topics could attract huge audiences. At Manchester, in the 1870s, 3,700 turned up to hear John Tyndall's talk on 'Crystalline and Molecular Forces' (Hewitt 2002: 4). These different examples all point to a common theme: the creation of a public (or publics) willing and able to pay for learning and enlightenment. And the supply matched this demand. The 1841 census enumerated 167 authors. The 1881 census counted 6,111. By 1901, there were 11,060 of them (Altick 1962: 400). Again, it is important to be clear that not all of these were intellectuals; nor was membership of sage culture confined only to those who wrote books or primarily identified themselves as authors. Nonetheless, this massive expansion in both readers and writers is noteworthy. It was this, more than anything else, that differentiated the Victorian intellectual from his or her predecessors. Nineteenth-century sages operated within a much enlarged and much more diverse public sphere.

This expansion was, in part, the product of the technological change described in Peter Huggill's chapter. For one thing, advances in printing technology drove down the cost and sped up the process of publishing. The result was an efflorescence of printed material. In all, the Victorian era saw the number of novels published rise from 2,000 to 8,000 a year, whilst something like 25,000 journals were founded (Garnett 2000: 200; Sutherland 1995: 151). Technological change also shaped the patterns of communication. The telegraph, as Lord Salisbury put it, enabled 'the opinions of the whole intelligent world' to come together (Freeman 1999: 59). Improved postal services also enabled writers to correspond with each other and with their readers. The Oxford don and author of *Alice in Wonderland*, C. L. Dodgson, wrote 98,721 letters between 1861 and 1898 (Waller 2006: 384). Railway travel likewise facilitated the spread of ideas. Not only was the train carriage the ideal place for reading, but the train itself took intellectuals out to meet their public. The apocryphal story of G. K. Chesterton sending a telegram to his wife reading 'Am in Market Harborough. Where ought I to be?' may, or may not, be true (Chesterton 1936: 320). Certainly, it was also told about the distinguished Victorian architect Sir Gilbert Scott (Cole 1980: 86). It does, however, capture a truth: that technology created a context in which more thinkers were more mobile and better able to reach more people than ever before.

Nor was this limited to the United Kingdom alone. Improved printing, communications, and steam-powered ships increasingly facilitated transnational links. As Daniel Howe notes in his chapter, not only could Americans read what was published in Britain – often, through piracy, remarkably soon after it was issued. They also increasingly got to see and hear British authors. What became known

as the trans-Atlantic ‘traffic in brains’ took intellectuals from Britain across North America, and often brought them significant financial reward (Collins 1983: 5). Not everyone enjoyed the experience, of course. Matthew Arnold’s first North American tour in 1883 was blighted by his poor voice projection: a fact that led to complaints, elocution lessons, and the humiliation of signs outside theatres promising that ‘this time Mr Matthew Arnold will be heard in every part of the Hall’ (Waller 2006: 581). But he still went back for more. Increasingly, too, this ‘traffic’ was two-way, with writers and thinkers travelling from America as well as to it. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s lecture series was one of the great events of the late 1840s for many of his British listeners.

Travel also helped foster more informal links. The Harvard historian Charles Eliot Norton befriended the English poet Arthur Hugh Clough when the latter was travelling through South Carolina. Norton encountered John Ruskin in Switzerland when he himself was on a European tour. He went on to meet the novelist Mrs Gaskell in Rome. As his travels continued, these friendships yielded others. ‘Almost every day’, he wrote to the New York writer G. W. Curtis, ‘some friend . . . leaves a memory of interest. Yesterday it was Leslie Stephen, the day before Frederic Harrison, the day before [Thomas] Carlyle, another day [John] Morley, another [John] Ruskin, another [Edward] Burne-Jones, another [William] Morris’ (Norton and De Wolfe Howe 1913: 447–48). So pervasive and persistent were these attentions that visiting often got in the way of work. In his diary for 9 October 1879, the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow complained: ‘This forenoon fourteen callers; thirteen of them English’ (Collins 1983: 22). The intellectual world had certainly got smaller.

The Victorian world also provided new places for the dissemination of ideas. This was the quintessential age of the public speech. As Balfour Brown recalled, the Victorians possessed ‘an inordinate belief in the use of lectures . . . people seemed to think that progress was only attainable by means of mechanics’ institutes’ (Balfour Brown 1917: 121). Nor were Mechanics’ Institutes the only forums available – although their establishment did for a while provide somewhere for artisans to encounter advanced education. In 1833, the scientist William Whewell scarcely exaggerated when he observed that there were scholarly associations in ‘almost every little town’ in the country (Orange 1971: 322). Literary and philosophical societies, libraries, and even laboratories, all played host to travelling lecturers. Organizations sprung up to capitalize on this demand – from the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1826) to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which toured provincial cities from 1831 onwards. They were followed by the Social Science Association (1857 to 1884) and by the National Association for the Advancement of Art (1887–90). The events they staged did not only draw a crowd, they were also widely covered in newspapers and other periodicals. Indeed, even linguistic barriers were no obstacle to this. When the poet Gottfried Kinkel lectured to the Manchester Athenaeum in 1852, he spoke in German and the local press carried full translations.

The social, technological, educational, and economic structures of the Victorian world consequently created a space for intellectuals: a larger and more sustainable space than had ever existed before. The growth in publications inspired a demand

for writers: more than 24,000 people wrote for Victorian periodicals (Hoppen 1998: 376). The development of new public forums and the popularity of public speeches created a requirement for speakers, whilst the expansion of the university system necessitated the recruitment of teachers. By 1900, something like 2,000 lecturers and professors were employed by the universities (Halsey and Trow 1971: 140). A significant number of people could now make a career from writing, speaking, or teaching – or, indeed, from all three.

In 1847 G. H. Lewes declared that ‘Literature has become a profession’. ‘In the present state of things’, he went on, ‘a man who has health, courage, and ability can earn by literature the income of a gentleman’ (Lewes 1847: 285–86). This ‘literary class’, as Walter Bagehot described it, was not enormous, nor was it confined solely to authors (Bagehot 1863: 293). In reality, very few people could survive on writing or lecturing alone. Writers often had other jobs too. The number of barristers, ex-barristers, and ‘barristers waiting for practice’ who took up the pen was noted by contemporaries, whilst in 1876 it was remarked that ‘at least a fourth’ of articles in the most prestigious journals were written by fellows or former fellows of Oxbridge Colleges (Reeve 1855: 484; G. C. Broderick quoted in Kent 1969: 189). The Victorian age was, however, the first in which a young and talented man like future Cabinet Minister John Morley could graduate from Oxford and conclude that journalism was not only a serious but even an inevitable career choice (Morley 1917: vol. i, 30).

This is not to say that the living was always easy for authors – especially those without other sources of income. Whether producing books, articles for newspapers, or reviews for periodicals, the position of the writer was undeniably precarious. Authors complained that they were not taken seriously enough. ‘I maintain that literature is neither appreciated, encouraged, nor honoured as it ought to be’, moaned the journalist William Jerdan in the early 1850s. Writers, he went on, ‘are liable to worse usage and more misfortune than any other intellectual class in our social scheme’ (Jerdan 1852–53: vol. ii, 4). The danger to one’s health of constantly struggling to meet deadlines was also stressed. ‘A clever man who makes £1000 a year out of literature’, advised Francis Davenant, ‘does so at the expense of his life’ (Davenant 1870: 166).

Nor was it easy for everyone to be an author. The place of women in this intellectual landscape was especially precarious (Peterson 2009). There were some high-profile female writers, including Margaret Oliphant, who was one of the most prolific contributors to the periodical press in the nineteenth century. Other authors, like the radical Quaker Mary Howitt, wrote as part of a family enterprise: even her *Autobiography* was collectively written. Nonetheless, women were responsible for only about 13 per cent of journal articles published in this era (Christ 1990: 21). They were also excluded from many public forums and could not receive degrees from the two ancient universities, Oxford and Cambridge. It was simply harder for women to make their mark and find their voice in the competitive market of ideas. Many, like the members of the ‘historic harem’ of women that the historian Edward Freeman assembled about himself, did good intellectual work by stealth. The women of his extended family were responsible for much of his research – but received no public acknowledgement (Walton 2006). For Freeman,

and for many of his contemporaries, intellectuals in general – and historians in particular – were, by definition, male (Smith 1998). Those women that succeeded in establishing their identity as intellectuals often did so in fields – like fiction and poetry – that could be regarded as suitably feminine.

What marked out the successful author was the fact that they had found an audience, or – as it was put at the time – a ‘public’. This was true even for those who were not dependent on writing for an income. But for figures like Harriet Martineau, who only escaped what she described as ‘pecuniary care’ through publishing, it was a matter of vital importance to have ‘won my public’ (Martineau 1877: 150, 169). There were, however, many publics in Victorian Britain. Wilkie Collins, in a famous article of 1858, distinguished between the ‘Known’ and ‘Unknown Public’. The former were the familiar readers of books, periodicals, and newspapers – a class that had grown, but was now dwarfed by ‘the Unknown Public’. These were the readers of penny dreadfuls and cheap, poorly produced magazines: the newly literate and the relatively poor (Collins 1858). His distinction was too sharply drawn, of course. But the point is still a good one.

Whilst the ‘Unknown Public’ was huge – Collins estimated that it amounted to millions – it was the ‘Known’ public that was the real focus for Victorian intellectuals. To be sure, there were those that self-consciously addressed a wider readership. Ruskin, for one, lectured at the London Working Men’s College in the 1850s and wrote *Fors Clavigera*, a series of ‘letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain’, 20 years later. But the lecturing ended unhappily and the letters had a very limited circulation. Although Ruskin would inspire some working-class readers, his audience was really middle and upper class. The same was true of Harriet Martineau. Although her works were intended to reach the widest possible readership, her sales suggest that she never did. As the *Quarterly Review* pointed out, even she did not appeal to many beyond ‘the cultivated class’ (Heyward 1877: 484).

Though it was smaller, the ‘Known Public’ was also diverse. Collins distinguished between ‘the public which reads for information, and devotes itself to Histories, Biographies, Essays, Treatises, Voyages, and Travels’; ‘the public which reads for amusement, and patronises Circulating Libraries and the railway book-stalls’; and ‘the public which reads nothing but newspapers’. Once again, the categories threaten to conceal as much as they reveal. There were clearly overlaps between these groups of readers. *The Times* found ‘unmitigated rubbish’ on most railway bookstalls, for example, but also encountered works of religion, Macaulay’s *History*, Kugler’s *Handbook of Painting*, and poetry by Tennyson (*The Times*, 9 August 1851: 7). Nevertheless, it does capture the real sense of a highly differentiated reading public – and the distinctions were not simply about individual taste. They were also about politics, with different persuasions catered for by different publications (Arnold 1864: 19–20). The result was a highly dynamic market of publications, opinions, and ideas.

To cultivate a public of any sort, an intellectual needed to develop a distinctive voice. When speaking in public intellectuals developed a characteristic performance: often didactic, sometimes impassioned; always consciously authentic and occasionally just plain idiosyncratic. Great speakers were known for their voice, their stance,

their charisma. ‘The originality of his thoughts, the consummate beauty of the language in which they were clothed, the calm dignity of his bearing, the absence of all oratorical effort, and the singular directness and simplicity of his manner’: here was an admirer describing Emerson, but he could have equally been writing about John Henry Newman, who was equally famous for the beauty of his voice, or John Ruskin, whose gestures alone were regarded by admirers as possessing an almost mystical meaning (Ireland 1882: 141). When writing, intellectuals likewise needed to be distinctive and to cultivate recognizably individual style. This was even true when writing anonymously – as many journals required their authors to do. Despite the fact both James Stephen and his son James Fitzjames Stephen wrote for journals that did not publish their names, they nonetheless each developed a personal following. ‘Time was’, wrote James Stephen, ‘when I enjoyed a repute as a writer of “Edinburgh Reviews”, I hope, as I very sincerely believe, that you will eclipse me’ (Young 2007: 129).

Different roles required different registers, of course. In the *Cornhill Magazine*, Fitzjames Stephen was ‘bound to keep within the limits prescribed by the tastes of average readers of light literature’, whilst in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he was able to be freer and to talk about ‘the graver topics of the day’ (Stephen 1895: 216, 214). Those who sought to overcome the divisions of the marketplace often adopted a prophetic tone: aping the cadences and language of the King James Bible. The visionary utterances of John Ruskin; the grandstanding of Thomas Carlyle; even the supreme self-confidence of Matthew Arnold: these were archetypal examples of the voice of the sage, leading George Eliot to ‘venerate’ Ruskin as a ‘Hebrew Prophet’, Froude to compare Carlyle to Isaiah, and Arnold to be attacked as an ‘elegant Jeremiah’ (Eliot 1954–78: vol. ii, 422–23; Froude 1882: 8; Arnold 1869: 32). Other writers adopted a different pose, that of the specialist or disinterested expert. It was, he claimed, simply as a ‘biologist’ that T. H. Huxley wrote articles and delivered lectures (Huxley 1881: 16). But it was in this guise that he was able to offer his opinion, not just on science but also on education, ethics, and religion. His voice became equally well known. It was thus that he – like Ruskin, Carlyle, and Arnold – could be so easily imitated in Mallock’s *New Republic*.

A writer with a distinctive voice and a particular public could transcend medium, genre, and specialism. Just as Huxley wrote on ‘Science and Culture’ (1880), so Arnold wrote on ‘Literature and Science’ (1882). Their established public personae legitimated their views. The same was true of writers like Fitzjames Stephen. After all, there was no real reason why his views on literature, politics, or modern thought should be more authoritative than any one else’s: he was a poor judge of good writing, had been a notable failure at university, and for much of his career he possessed no real interest in party politics. Yet the trenchant quality of his voice gave him a readership and sustained his career through more than 1,000 articles in journals. The individuality of an intellectual’s voice also enabled them to articulate their ideas in a wide variety of arenas. Matthew Arnold’s great mission statement, *Culture and Anarchy*, began as a lecture to the University of Oxford in June 1867. It was followed by a series of articles in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and then in 1869 it became a book. This was typical. In an attempt both to maximize income and audience, writers often wrote articles or delivered lectures that were

subsequently collected into books – innumerable Victorian publications were, after all, produced in precisely this way. The intellectual was someone who could address different forums and still project a sense of self.

This was a difficult balancing act – and it was one that grew harder and harder. As the reading public grew in size and diversity, so it became more difficult to conceive of it as a unified whole or to reach out beyond a relatively narrow group of readers. In many ways, indeed, the Victorian public sphere was a victim of its own success: constantly threatening to collapse into its component parts, with different publics creating different – and mutually incomprehensible – spheres of their own. Many intellectuals, like Matthew Arnold for instance, recognized this danger and attempted to defend the universal values of free expression and disinterested thought that they associated with the wider public sphere (Melton 2001: 118). But the struggle was one that some writers – like the philosopher Henry Sidgwick – soon gave up (Collini 2001: 46). Just as Mallock suggested, and as Jürgen Habermas subsequently argued, by the end of the Victorian era it sometimes appeared that the intellectual elite had broken off from the public sphere, and was now simply talking to itself (Habermas 1989: 168–75).

The growth of academic specialization only exacerbated this process by making it more difficult for any one individual to master multiple fields of knowledge. It was also possible to misjudge the audience and strike the wrong tone in the wrong place. Ruskin's unhappy first experience as a social and economic critic was an early and important example of this. Invited to contribute to the brand new *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, he offered a series of articles that would become a book: *Unto this Last*. But their radical critique of market economics was not welcome within the pages of the self-consciously respectable journal, and Ruskin's own authority as an expert on art translated poorly into the ever more tightly defined world of economic theory. This problem was aggravated by the rise of increasingly specialized publications. The foundation of the scientific journal *Nature* in 1869, the philosophical journal *Mind* in 1876, the *English Historical Review* in 1886, and the *Economic Journal* in 1891 each provided well-defined destinations for particular ways of thinking. The growth and development of universities also affected the market for ideas. They developed specialist techniques and rhetorics and made it more difficult for the non-specialist to contribute to their debates.

Of course, it would be wrong to overstress this specialization. The first editor of the *English Historical Review* became a bishop; whilst the first edition of *Mind* declared its goal as the attempt to recapture 'that essential unity that belonged to human knowledge under the name of Philosophy' (Anon. 1876: 2). University teachers were not as specialist as they were to become, and even in the sciences they could, like the late-Victorian academic W. H. R. Rivers, move seamlessly between disciplines – in his case, from physiology to psychology to anthropology, and then on to politics. But even this differentiation between physiology and psychology was new – and it was a product of greater intellectual specialization.

To make matters worse, Victorian intellectuals were always doubtful about the impact of their thought. The frequent celebrations of the nineteenth century as an age of intellect, and of writers as the new legislators, were accompanied by real and repeated anxiety. Carlyle's famous lecture, 'The Hero as Man of Letters'

(1840), is a case in point. The man of letters, he declared, was a product of the modern world, and served for contemporaries the function of 'Prophet, Priest, Divinity'. Moreover, he asserted, 'Of all Priesthoods, Aristocracies, Governing Classes at present in the world, there is no class comparable for importance to that priesthood of the Writers of Books'. Nonetheless, even this encomium on authors was not wholeheartedly enthusiastic or conclusive. Writers, Carlyle maintained, were dangerous creatures: ill disciplined, badly organised, and capable of luring the unwary into scepticism or even unbelief. The lecture itself finishes not with a bang, but with the curious half-question, half-expostulation 'But!—'; almost as though Carlyle could not really decide what it was that the man of letters was supposed to do. Moreover, as his subsequent lecture, 'The Hero as King', made clear, the intellectual was by no means the most important figure in modern society. Indeed, his great hope was a great man: another Cromwell or Napoleon. His men of letters – Samuel Johnson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Robert Burns – could scarcely compare to those two in terms of their impact (Carlyle 1840). Even Carlyle, a man who apparently celebrated the intellectual as a hero and as a divinity, recognized the weakness of his own position and doubted even his own significance as an intellectual, worrying that the role of writer and public thinker was not really worth pursuing (Clarke 1991).

Political changes reinforced these doubts (Whyte forthcoming). As John Morley recalled, by the middle of the nineteenth century, 'the men of letters and best known writers in every walk were almost, if not quite, all members of the Liberal household' (Morley 1917: 26). This did not mean that they always voted Liberal. But the intellectuals' own commitment to free thought and their emphasis on rational politics did tend to promote liberalism. Moreover, as John Stuart Mill observed, the Conservative Party was seen as 'the stupid Party' (Mill 1873: 156). Liberalism, wrote Fitzjames Stephen, signified 'generous and high-minded sentiments upon political subjects, guided by a highly instructed, large-minded, and impartial intellect' (Stephen 1862: 72). It thus conformed to their worldview and confirmed their own importance. As the political system was reformed, however, intellectuals became more and more disconcerted by the results. The new electors of 1867 and – especially – 1884 did not seem inclined to listen. They included many of the 'Unknown Public' that the sages struggled to reach, and their views appeared distressingly irrational. The Home Rule crisis cemented this sense of disillusionment and many thinkers abandoned the Liberal Party altogether. Defending his defection, the historian John Seeley contrasted the values of the Victorian thinkers with those of the increasingly democratic and demotic Liberals. 'In our Liberalism it was always a commonplace that liberty is wholly different from licence, and that anarchy is as great an evil as tyranny, but the new system seems to know nothing of such a distinction' (Roach 1957: 80). It was a cry from the heart – the complaint of a class who increasingly felt that they were not being listened to.

The social and economic position of intellectuals served to make their position still more ambiguous. Put plainly, these were people who claimed enormous cultural authority yet who often possessed little economic clout. True enough, some remarkable writers were able to earn substantial fees: Macaulay was paid £20,000 for the rights to his *History*; Dickens earned nearly £3,000 a year between 1846 and 1870 (Bonham-Carter 1978: vol. i. 60–70). Some academics were also relatively

well off, with the heads of Oxford Colleges bringing in £1,500 a year, and professors receiving around £900 per annum. But few thinkers were this fortunate. Most writers scraped by and ordinary tutors at Oxford were not wealthy. The fellows of Pembroke College, for one, complained at the turn of the century that they earned only £375 a year (Dunbabin 1997: 397, 406, 411–13). This placed them in a difficult position, for this was nowhere near the income of a gentleman. Contemporaries agreed that ‘a professional man’ could ‘keep up appearances’ on £800 a year (Collini 1991: 37). By this measure, the impoverished dons of Pembroke – not to mention innumerable writers – were clearly struggling.

The contrast between the rewards for writing, lecturing, or teaching and the incomes enjoyed by many of their readers, audiences, and students was palpable, and made more self-evident by the close proximity of the intellectual and social elites. The well-travelled Russian aristocrat Count Constantine Benckendorff observed that there was ‘no other country where the ruling few mixed so easily with the literary and artistic world’ (Benckendorff 1954: 98). Great authors were ‘lionised’. Grand academics corresponded with statesmen and counted numerous aristocrats amongst their pupils. Scientists performed in salons and journalists dined with the leading men in Europe. Yet this could never be a relationship of equals. Even the great Henry Reeve, who counted monarchs amongst his friends and made thousands writing leaders for *The Times* and editing the *Edinburgh Review*, was never allowed to forget his place, his ‘humble position, his obscurity, his apparent nothingness’, as the aristocratic Charles Greville put it (Morley 1988: 49).

The result of this disparity was the development and articulation of a set of distinctive values (Whyte 2005). Contrasting their lives with those of the very rich, the intellectuals placed a premium on thought over wealth, reason over riches. In 1876 William Loftie eulogized a typical intellectual, who had made ‘Judgement and taste, not money . . . [his] capital’ (Loftie 1876: 46). In his 1873 *The Intellectual Life*, P. G. Hamerton made a similar point. Addressing himself to ‘a Genius Careless in Money Matters’, he wrote of the ways in which

We come to hate money-matters when we find that they exclude all thoughtful and disinterested conversation . . . Our happiest hours have been spent with poor scholars, and artists, and men of science, whose words make us rich indeed. Then we dislike money because it rules and restrains us, and because it is unintelligent and seems horrible.

(Hamerton 1873: 186)

Intellectuals expressed these values in their clothes and in homes that were sharply distinguished from both the extravagance of the rich and what Beatrice Webb described as the ‘dowdiness of the middle class’ (Webb 1982–85: vol. i., 105). The novelist Mrs Humphry Ward captured this well in her recollections of life as a don’s wife in the Oxford of the 1870s. ‘Most of us’, she wrote,

were very anxious to be up-to-date, and in the fashion, whether in aesthetics, or housekeeping, or education. But our fashion was not that of Belgravia or Mayfair, which indeed was scorned! It was the fashion of the movement which sprang from Morris and Burne Jones.

(Ward 1918: 190–92)

Persian carpets, Japanese screens, Dutch china, Morris wallpapers, and Pre-Raphaelite-inspired art were ubiquitous in the homes of writers and thinkers who wanted to exhibit a ‘refined and artistic taste’ (Black 1893: 68).

These values also underwrote a lifestyle. From university onwards, intellectuals institutionalized their identity in clubs and societies. The elite undergraduates of Cambridge met as the ‘Apostles’. In Oxford, they called themselves ‘Old Mortality’. Graduation brought with it more of the same: the New Club, the Savile – ‘full of young writers, young dons, and young scientific men’ – and, with time, the Athenaeum (Besant 1902: 176). This was the *ne plus ultra* of this culture: home to ‘persons of intellect and of intellectual tastes, lovers and cultured adherents of art and letters’, as one contemporary put it (Waugh 1900: 117). Unsurprisingly, intellectuals also formed clubs for the purpose of discussing ideas: the Metaphysical Society of the 1870s and Synthetic Society of the 1890s brought scientists, theologians, philosophers, and others together to debate ideas. The Metaphysical Society inspired the ‘New Symposium’ that featured in the *Nineteenth Century* of 1877. There were even intellectual hobbies – and Leslie Stephen founded a walking club, the ‘Sunday Tramps’, made up of thinkers, teachers, and ‘precisely the kind of person who writes articles for newspapers’ (Whyte 2007). Sure enough, Stephen himself wrote up their exploits in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

As Noel Annan famously showed more than 50 years ago, this intellectual culture was also further cemented by intermarriage (Annan 1955). Sharing the same values and same experiences, the lifestyles and the same tastes, it was hardly surprising that the Darwins and Huxleys and Stephens and Trevelyans should come to share the same gene pool. The intellectuals thus shared a common culture. There was scope within it for scientists as well as classicists; Nonconformists and freethinkers as well as Churchmen. Their origins were overwhelmingly middle class: something like 86 per cent of authors came from bourgeois families (Altick 1962: 394). But a shared intellectual culture helped created a ‘spontaneous freemasonry’ even for those who were not (Stephen 1895: 312).

In a period of unprecedented change, then, a new sort of public looked to a new breed of thinkers to make sense of the world around them. Seizing the opportunities provided by the growth of this public sphere, these intellectuals developed a characteristic rhetoric, often aping the cadences of the King James Bible or the Book of Common Prayer. They really were the prophets for the Victorian age. Yet, at the same time, they doubted their place within this society, concerned that they were excluded by the social elite and ignored by the large sections of the public itself. Nineteenth-century intellectuals were consequently ambiguous figures: at once the beneficiaries of this new era, and also often its harshest critics. It was a paradox perfectly captured in the bitter satire and agonized debates of Mallock’s *The New Republic*. This is a book that spoke – and still speaks – of a distinctive group; one that was both created and threatened by the very forces that brought into being the Victorian world itself.

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PART V

CULTURE



CHAPTER THIRTY

PERIODICALISM



Graham Law

‘The rise of the periodical press is the great event in modern history’ – this according to E. S. Dallas, the Marshall McLuhan of the mid-nineteenth century, who, in a two-part article in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, defined the term in the broadest sense to include impartially ‘a daily paper, a weekly journal, a monthly magazine, or a quarterly review’ (Dallas 1859a: I 100–101). Dallas claimed that the application of industrial operations to the press – pulp paper making, stereotype setting, steam roller printing, and the rest – constituted a media revolution as far-reaching as the creation of the alphabet or the invention of printing. His interest, though, was less in the economic and technological causes than in the social and political consequences of this third revolution, less in quantitative than qualitative signs of change. In drawing attention to serial publication as the crucial innovation of the age, Dallas thus concentrates less on the emergence of journals of mass consumption – the *Family Herald* (from 1843), *London Journal* (1845), and other penny weeklies, then circulating in the hundreds of thousands, as discussed in the previous volume of *Blackwood’s* (Oliphant 1858) – than on the proliferation of what he calls ‘class journals’ (Dallas 1859a: I 103), that is, periodicals targeting not the indiscriminate mass but rather those finely differentiated categories of readers affiliated to specific religious, political, professional, social, regional, and cultural communities. In this development Dallas perceives a virtuous circle of interaction among authors, publishers, and readers that serves to promote the healthy cultivation of public opinion.

As regards authorship, Dallas stresses that, because of the multiplication of periodical titles of all kinds, the practice of writing for publication is ‘fast ceasing to be a peculiar profession, and is becoming an ordinary accomplishment’ (Dallas 1859a: I 97). At the same time, he argues that the convention of anonymity in journalism, though then increasingly under attack, in fact preserves the press from personalities and egotism, and, by aligning periodicals with the interests of groups rather than individuals, represents ‘the corner-stone of class journalism’ (Dallas 1859a: II 184). As for publishing, Dallas sees the commercial foundations of the press not as sources of vested interest and venality but rather as affording ‘the best promise of its efficiency and the best guarantee of its integrity’ (Dallas 1859a: II

180), because 'in a country habituated to the exercise of private judgment, opinion is not different from any other item of merchandise . . . it follows the known laws of supply and demand' (Dallas 1859a: II 192). He thus sees the periodical boom as a movement away from monopoly and towards healthful diversity. With regard to readership, finally, Dallas suggests that journal subscriptions represent not passive consumption of print commodities but rather forms of voluntary combination akin to public associations created to achieve specific social ends. Thus, the contemporary press should be conceptualized not as 'a fourth estate, but a second representation of the third estate' (Dallas 1859a: I 106). He depicts the dialectical nature of the formation of political consensus thus: '[Periodical literature] . . . is not only the expression of public opinion and the index of contemporary history, it is itself a great force that reacts on the life which it represents, half creating what it professes only to reflect' (Dallas 1859a: I 97). In this, Dallas anticipates Habermas in identifying the periodical press as a key agent in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere.

Dallas's far-reaching argument was articulated at a triumphal moment for nineteenth-century liberalism, shortly before the final step in the abolition of the long-standing fiscal constraints on public communication – the imposts on advertising, news publication, and paper for printing, known to their many opponents as the 'taxes on knowledge'. The remainder of this essay will be concerned with discussing the validity of its premises and conclusions over the Victorian period as a whole. I will begin briefly with an overview of the quantitative growth of the periodical market, before turning to a more detailed consideration of its qualitative determinants and effects, in both cases concentrating on aspects of authorship, publishing, and readership.

PERIODICAL GROWTH

The significant diminution following the 1832 parliamentary reform act in all three 'taxes on knowledge', and most notably the reduction of the newspaper stamp from fourpence to a single penny in 1836, clearly represented a general stimulus to serial publication. However, the official stamp returns suggest that the impact was strongest in the metropolitan weekly press, with the *Illustrated London News*, founded in the 1842, representing the bestselling news organ at the mid century, with sales of over 100,000. The abolition of the stamp in 1855, in contrast, had its most immediate effect on daily and provincial newspapers. According to Mitchell's *Newspaper Press Directory*, the first of the periodical catalogues created to serve the needs of the advertising industry, the number of newspaper titles published in the United Kingdom increased by nearly 30 per cent between 1854 and 1856 alone. By then there were penny journals on sale each morning in both the metropolis and the provinces, putting a daily paper within the economic grasp of the lower middle class for the first time. Among the pioneers were the *Daily Telegraph* of Sheffield, among the first English industrial cities to host two cheap dailies of different political complexions (Lee 1976: 274–77), and the London *Daily Telegraph*, which by the early 1870s was claiming sales of over 200,000, then perhaps the largest daily circulation in the world (Altick 1957: 355). From the late 1860s there was also a wave of halfpenny daily evening papers, with Tillotson's

Bolton Evening News (1867) in industrial Lancashire and Cassell's *Echo* in London (1868) among the pioneers.

The total number of periodical publications issued in Britain during the nineteenth century remains speculative. The latest update of John North's monumental *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals* lists around 50,000 titles, of which perhaps 40 per cent represent alternate names of otherwise registered journals, but estimates that a total of some 125,000 will eventually be recorded (North 2010). Unfortunately for our purposes, Mitchell's *Press Directory* did not begin to list magazines until the early 1860s, so that the boom in 'class' journals reported by Dallas as early as 1859 only registers clearly in the statistical record nearly a generation later. Between 1861 and 1901 Mitchell records an overall growth in current periodical titles of rather more than 300 per cent, from slightly over 1,500 to not far short of 5,000, with the rate of increase climbing noticeably after 1875. The number of newspaper titles peaked around the turn of the century, though magazine titles continued to grow strongly until the Great War: in 1861 magazine titles made up only around 30 per cent of the whole, whereas by 1901 they accounted for about 50 per cent. Over the same period, Mitchell records a growth in secular periodicals from approximately 60 to 80 per cent of the total, though the decline in the percentage of journals with religious affiliations only becomes apparent by the later 1870s, and the absolute number of religious titles continues to grow even into the new century (Eliot 1994: 81–87). From 1879 Mitchell himself began to make use of the category of 'class periodicals', and in the last decades of the century the most impressive growth was found in that sector. The classification ranged from scientific, technical, and trade journals, to those affiliated to political parties, religious denominations, and civil societies, to those catering to fans of leisure activities, including sport, music, needlework, and gardening, as well as to those serving demographic groups based on region, gender, age, or ethnicity. In terms of individual circulation, of course, these segmental periodicals were not in the same league as the latest generation of 'mass' miscellanies, of which the leader was George Newnes's *Tit-Bits* (1881), which was selling well over half a million copies by the early 1890s. Alfred Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* (1896), the first halfpenny metropolitan daily paper aimed at a mass audience nationwide, could claim a similar circulation before 1900 (Altick 1957: 396).

This boom in periodical publishing entailed a surge not only in subscribers but also in those employed as writers: the decennial census returns suggest that, between 1851 and 1911, those reporting themselves as 'journalists, authors, editors, reporters' or the like, grew 500 per cent from 2,751 (of which 106 were women, or 3.9 per cent) to 13,786 (1,756, or 12.7 per cent), with the rate of increase mounting steadily over time (Lee 1976: 130). Although it covers merely 40-odd of the most intellectually prestigious quarterly reviews and monthly magazines – thus omitting not only daily newspapers and weekly journals, but also all periodicals targeting either a broad popular or narrow specialist audience – the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, in identifying the authorship of over 85 per cent of all published articles, the large majority unsigned, represents the most detailed overview of the character and output of the Victorian journalist. Over 90,000 articles of identified authorship are listed, the most compendious titles being the

two longest-running monthly literary miscellanies, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (indexed 1824–1900) and *Fraser's Magazine* (1830–82), with around 7,900 and 6,500 articles respectively. With nearly 12,000 contributors identified in total, this makes an average of just under eight articles per author, with a range from a single item to nearly 700. E. S. Dallas, for example, is listed as the author of only 22 items in five different periodicals, his numerous obituaries, book reviews, etc. for *The Times* and other dailies, and his theatrical and other contributions to weekly journals like the *Saturday Review*, all inevitably overlooked. Among the identified contributors, those associated with the church, the law, and science account for around 12, 6, and 5 per cent respectively, with both women (13 per cent) and professional journalists (5 per cent) also constituting only small minorities. However, with 568 and 697 entries respectively, by some margin the two most prolific authors listed are both full-time female journalists: Christie Johnstone (1781–1857), long the mainstay of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*; and Margaret Oliphant (1828–97), an active contributor not only to *Blackwood's* but also to nine other *Wellesley* periodicals. This suggests that the proportions might be rather different if measured by quantity of output rather than number of contributors. By either measure, contrary to Dallas's expectations, the trend in the last three decades covered by the index is towards not only more signed articles but also more contributions from professional authors (Houghton 1999). By the end of the nineteenth century, then, with the gradual clarification of the copyright code also making intellectual property in material first issued in periodicals more secure (Law 2000: 164–65), there was clearly a significant increase in the number of those able to live by the pen.

PERIODICAL AUTHORSHIP

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, though the term 'journalist', in the sense of a contributor to periodicals, is found from the late seventeenth century, it is only with the Industrial Revolution that we encounter terms for more specialist functionaries of the press such as 'reporter' (from 1797), 'sub-editor' (1834), '(war) correspondent' (1844) and 'leader-writer' (1882). Similarly, the abstract noun 'journalism', meaning the practice or profession of such writers, is not found until the eve of the Victorian era. The first usage is traced to an 1833 article in the *Westminster Review*, unsigned but in fact by Gibbons Merle, then Paris correspondent of the *Globe*. There, in commenting on 'Du Journalisme', recently published in the *Revue Encyclopédique*, Merle begins from the usefulness of the term itself: 'A word was sadly wanted. The inter-communication of opinion and intelligence . . . by means of journals, is too important to pass without a name' (Merle 1833: 195). His wider purpose is to contrast 'the state of journalism in France and England' (Merle 1833: 196), much to the disadvantage of the latter, the root cause being traced to the newspaper stamp and the monopolistic press conditions it fosters. The worst symptom of the malaise, according to Merle, is the 'preservation of the anonymous', which both protects the vicious and incompetent and prevents the London press from functioning as 'an admirable school for future public servants' as it does in Paris (Merle 1833: 202–3). As a result, in England there persisted an 'odium attached to journalism' (Merle 1833: 195–96).

Indeed, at this period those connected to the press were often unwelcome in polite society and excluded from entry into gentlemanly professions like the law. The pronounced radicalism of popular papers during the early Victorian decades, when the ‘war of the unstamped press’ made outlaws of many editors (Wiener 1969), and the liberal dominance of the press in later years, undoubtedly made the profession of journalism suspicious to those of conservative views. However, even such an advanced reformist as J. A. Roebuck, like Merle vehemently opposed to anonymity, could complain in 1835 that, as a consequence, the practice of journalism had fallen into ‘the hands of the ignorant, the vulgar, the vicious’ (Roebuck 1835: 7). Unlike lawyers, clergymen, and physicians, nineteenth-century journalists, though they typically experienced an on-the-job apprenticeship and ‘usually treated the work as a lifelong career’, had ‘none of the characteristics (paper qualifications, or membership of a self-governing body regulating admission) which are used to define a profession’ (Brown 1985: 94). The French Société des Gens de Lettres was founded in 1837 in part to represent the interests of professional writers in the face of the growing power of periodical publishers. Though there had been a number of abortive attempts in the meantime, it was almost half a century before a British equivalent, the Incorporated Society of Authors, was established in 1884 with the monthly *Author* as its mouthpiece from 1890 (Bonham-Carter 1978: 119–20). The Chartered Institute of Journalists was also formed in 1890, though its membership was not limited to press employees, as echoed in the title of its organ, the *Journalist and Newspaper Proprietor*. Bringing press workers under the umbrella of the labour movement, the National Union of Journalists was founded in Britain only in 1907, more than a decade after similar developments in France and the United States, for example. Again, in the field of formal professional education, France and America – with pioneering schools like l’École Supérieure de Journalisme (Paris, 1899) and the Missouri School of Journalism (Columbia, MO, 1908) – were well ahead of Britain with its London School of Journalism founded after the First World War. In short, British authors in general and journalists in particular were rather slow to incorporate or otherwise organize themselves – this, despite the fact that, as Dallas noted, the exponential growth in periodical publications both reflected and encouraged new forms of civil association both political and apolitical.

* * *

Inherited from the miscellanies of the previous century, impersonality remained the rule of journalism well into the Victorian period. But by the turn of the twentieth century, editorial personality had become a valued discursive device and commercial commodity, so that signature already represented the norm. As reflected in the articles by Merle, Roebuck, and indeed Dallas himself, the transition aroused controversy, so that there were many animated debates on the subject, with both sides adamant that sound political commentary or impartial book reviewing were impossible either with or without the cloak of anonymity (Maurer 1948). The first-person plural was defended for its dependence on collective authority and encouragement of judicial impartiality; the first-person singular for its promotion of critical honesty and reliance on individual integrity.

The transformation from anonymity to signature was remarkably uneven, with the change occurring at a different pace according to both genre of discourse and category of periodical. Before the mid century, verse, fiction, and other narrative modes were much more likely to be signed than book reviews, leading articles, and other kinds of critical writing. At the same time, lighter monthly literary miscellanies – notably *Ainsworth's* (from 1842) and *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine* (1845) – were also quick to see the advantages of the named contributor, as indeed were some of the popular family weeklies. Despite deep ideological differences, in targeting an urban readership among the working and lower middle classes respectively, the aggressive Chartist G. W. M. Reynolds and the sentimental paternalist Charles Dickens were alike in energetically promoting editorial personality in their weekly family journals, *Reynolds's Miscellany* (1846–64) and *Household Words* (1850–59). On the other hand, most of the established daily newspapers, weekly reviews, and venerable quarterlies upheld the tradition of anonymity into the new century: the *Wellesley Index* suggests that, until 1870, around 97 per cent of articles in the set of elite periodicals treated were unsigned, with a figure as high as 90 per cent maintained overall.

At the same time, strongly partisan magazines were far more likely to remain committed to anonymity than papers cultivating diversity of opinion (Morley 1867). *Macmillan's Magazine* (from 1859), the *Fortnightly Review* (1865), and the *Contemporary Review* (1866), representing a new modernizing generation of intellectual review, were important pioneers in both the theory and practice of personalized criticism, advocating new editorial concepts such as the 'open platform' and the 'modern symposium' to promote debate within their pages. The *Fortnightly* declared: 'Each contributor, in giving his name, will not only give an earnest of his sincerity, but will claim the privilege of perfect freedom of opinion, unbiassed by the opinions of the Editor or of fellow contributors' (cited in Nash 2010: 57). Later in the century, staunch advocates of the 'New Journalism' like W. T. Stead, helped to promote an intimate, subjective style of editorial personality in papers seeking a mass audience through such popular devices as the 'celebrity at home' interview or the crusading social campaign. Matthew Arnold, who coined the phrase 'new journalism', was sceptical concerning these developments, seeing them as symptoms of the 'feather-brained' thinking of 'the democracy', that is, the new working-class generation enfranchised by the 1868 Reform Act and given elementary education under the 1870 Forster Bill (Arnold 1887: 638–39). But Stead himself, then editor of the hard-hitting London evening paper the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was equally critical of the classical impersonality of the established daily newspapers and the old quarterly reviews: '[E]verything depends upon the person – the individual. Impersonal journalism is effete. To influence men you must be a man, not a mock-uttering oracle. The democracy is under no awe of the mystic "We"' (Stead 1886b: 663). However, that the term New Journalism could be applied with equal acceptability to the latest popular entertainment weekly *Tit-Bits*, in which George Newnes created his own editorial personality in the tradition of Reynolds and Dickens, suggests also that powerful economic imperatives underlay the new trend.

In sum, the transition from anonymous to signed authorship in periodicals was fiercely contested throughout the Victorian period, and reflected a complex

combination of political, social, and economic determinants. But as the century wore on, and the practices of print capitalism became prevalent, commercial pressures began to dominate. Thus, while adding a surplus value to the practice of writing regularly for magazines and newspapers, the cultivation of editorial personality helped to construct periodicals as articles of mass consumption.

PERIODICAL PUBLISHING

Family firms were the fundamental units of ownership and control in periodical publishing throughout much of the nineteenth century, though joint-stock companies began to be formed around the mid century, and before the end the spread of syndication and amalgamation had prepared the way for the conglomerates that were to dominate twentieth-century media (Lee 1976: 79–93). This account fits the newspaper press in particular, however, and there were variations in other sectors of serial publication. Though daily and weekly news sheets, whether metropolitan or provincial, tended to be founded by existing family printing concerns, general class periodicals like the monthly magazines, and the reviews both quarterly and weekly, were more likely to be issued by established book publishers in the form of partnerships; the literary monthlies, for example, were typically issued by, and indeed served as publicity for, houses noted for their fiction lists, such as Blackwood's and Smith, Elder. Journals affiliated to a specific political party or religious denomination inevitably sought some form of financial backing from wealthy members or supporters. Reformist periodicals with overt moral and social goals were often the organs of voluntary associations both secular and religious: for example, the evangelical Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the utilitarian Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge were among the most versatile of serial publishers, including works in fascicle form as well as cheap periodicals, thus rapidly expanding the number of common readers from the 1830s (Altick 1957: 99–140). Yet, family firms like Chambers's in Edinburgh and Cassell's in London espoused similar causes and were almost as prompt and energetic in exploring the expanding popular market. Indeed, those firms seeking to reach a growing mass readership tended to be among the first to require the latest technological and the largest capital resources, and thus were early in exploring the advantages of limited liability and economies of scale through syndication services, press agencies, chain formation, and amalgamation.

A good deal of the material printed in nineteenth-century periodicals, especially though by no means exclusively local newspapers, was not unique to each publication. Well into the Victorian period, penny-a-liners and other freelancers still made their living from selling the same information to several papers, while scissors and paste continued to be used to reproduce items from journals not competing in the same market, with or without permission or acknowledgement. But from the mid century more formal mechanisms began to be developed for these purposes, typically orchestrated by press and syndication agents, though the initial moves in the wholesale distribution of copy were undoubtedly those of commercial advertising agencies like Mitchell's. Through the targeted distribution of display advertising to appropriate journals in the metropolis, the provinces and even the colonies, such agents could readily create a demand to match the supply of

consumer goods from English manufacturers. By the 1860s, centrally produced material could be broadcast through several channels. In the case of the latest intelligence, whether stock prices or racing results, news of the outbreak of war or the death of a president, the telegraph line was everything. The Press Association, formed in 1868 by members of the Provincial Newspaper Society to agitate for the nationalization of private telegraphic companies under the Post Office, soon linked up with Paul Julius Reuter's Telegram Company to become the principal domestic news agency. With regard to the syndicating of centrally produced editorial copy of a less pressing kind, whether London or Continental newsletters, special features, or installment fiction, the main devices used were pre-printed supplements, partly printed sheets, and light-weight plates bearing newsprint columns in stereotype. Cassell's General Press in London and Tillotson's Fiction Bureau in Bolton, Lancashire, were among the first and most successful agencies of this kind (Law 2000: 41-91).

The parallel process of creating chains of newspapers – initially local variants of a single central title – was also promoted by the same firms, in the form of Cassell's 'Town and Country Newspaper' system and Tillotson's 'Lancashire Journals' series, both starting in the 1860s. The beginnings of the process of large-scale media conglomeration through a combination of merger, acquisition, and expansion, however, are only apparent in the final decades of the century. The key figures here were George Newnes and Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe. Newnes's popular serial publishing empire centred on the weekly *Tit-Bits* (1881) and the monthly *Strand Magazine* (1892), while his only significant newspaper venture was with the relatively unsuccessful London clubland evening paper, the *Westminster Gazette* (1893). In contrast, Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press Company soon featured not only a stable of magazines on a par with that of Newnes, but also a string of national newspapers beginning with the popular halfpennies, the *Daily Mail* (1896) and *Daily Mirror* (1903), and augmented by the acquisition of the quality Sunday *Observer* in 1905 and the daily *Times* in 1908. By the turn of the twentieth century periodical organization was thus moving in a direction contrary to the healthy diversification envisaged by Dallas 50 years earlier.

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While mid-nineteenth-century print media were thus organized in the main by commercial enterprises, they performed a variety of civic functions that served to sustain what Habermas calls the 'the web of public communication' (Habermas 1989: 161). I will focus briefly on three such functions where periodicals played a central role – the keeping of a record of public events and affairs, the public reviewing of publications, exhibitions, or performances, and the public previewing of works subsequently issued in volume form – the latter two provoking a critically productive 'trepidation of the spheres' of serial and book publication (Brake 2001: 3-26).

Though the phrase itself is not recorded in the OED, the concept of the 'journal of record' seems in fact to have a lengthy history, extending over time to include not only periodicals issued by public bodies but also those in private hands. Published 'by authority' since the 1660s under the licensing acts, throughout the nineteenth

century the *London Gazette* continued to provide a listing of royal appointments, whether military, ecclesiastical or diplomatic, and a range of parliamentary and legal notices. The daily records of proceedings recorded by the Clerk of the Parliaments in the *House of Lords Journals* and *House of Commons Journal* from early in the sixteenth century were not printed until early in the eighteenth. The reporting of debates, however, continued to be treated as a breach of parliamentary privilege until late in the century, with William Cobbett's *Parliamentary Debates* (1802) among the pioneering journals. This was taken over by his printer Thomas Curson Hansard from 1812. But the record long continued unauthorized and reliant on parliamentary reporting in daily papers such as *The Times* and *Morning Chronicle*, the publication by then known simply as *Hansard* being officially taken over by Parliament as late as 1909. With their regular epitomes of proceedings at the central courts and the movements of the stock exchange and other markets, long-established metropolitan daily newspapers thus represented a general record of public affairs. But just as significant as these developments at the national level were parallel processes in local governance. Both old county weeklies reaching widespread rural readerships, like the *Worcester Journal* or *Stanford Mercury*, and new city dailies serving the concentrated populations of the industrial conurbations, like the *Sheffield Telegraph* and *Manchester Guardian*, were increasingly seen as public records of social, commercial, legal, and governmental affairs in the provinces. In addition to the coverage of the activities of a range of local clubs and associations, they served notices concerning bankruptcies and partnerships as well as public auctions and commercial shipping, and reported not only the processes and judgments of regional courts but also the deliberations and decisions of local councils. Yet these recording functions by no means prevented local newspapers from taking up positions in the debates in question and frequently providing a platform for the political interests of a specific party, so that for provincial communities they indeed represented 'a great force that reacts on the life which it represents, half creating what it professes only to reflect', as Dallas put it (1859a: I 97).

Until around the mid-eighteenth century critical responses to recently published works typically appeared in pamphlet form, and the early review periodicals tended to offer little more than a listing of new titles available. However, a series of new periodical venues for reviewing emerged from the early decades of the nineteenth century: the quarterly political reviews beginning with the *Edinburgh* in 1802; a new generation of literary monthlies led by *Blackwood's* in 1817; and the specialist weekly reviews headed by the *Athenaeum* from 1828. During the Victorian period increasingly large numbers of newspapers, both metropolitan and provincial, daily and weekly, morning and evening, began to publish notices of more popular and general works of fiction and non-fiction alike, while the 'class' periodicals went in for more segmented reviewing, thus providing critical responses not only to specialist books from the field in question, including of course book trade journals like the *Publishers' Circular* (1837) and the *Bookseller* (1858), but also to general literature from the perspective of the communities of readers they served. The engagement of weekly and daily periodicals in public reviewing encouraged the growth not only in notices of public exhibitions in galleries, museums, and public performances both theatrical and musical, but also in commentary on the contents of periodicals of less frequent issue in the columns of those of more frequent issue:

for example, of quarterly reviews in weekly journals, or of monthly miscellanies in daily papers. In sum, the proliferation of Victorian periodicals promoted a more systematic and critical process of public intervention in the market for works of both art and science.

Many non-fictional works and most works of fiction were published first of all in serial form in fascicles, magazines, or newspapers, with the audience reached potentially much larger and broader than that for the first book edition, and with the proportion increasing steadily as the Victorian era progressed. Among notable examples of prose works attracting a good deal of critical attention when first issued in monthly instalments, we might list: Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) and Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1861), both in *Fraser's Magazine*; Ruskin's *Unto this Last* (1860) and Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–68, as 'Anarchy and Authority'), both in the *Cornhill Magazine*; or Bagehot's *English Constitution* (1867–68) and Spencer's *Political Institutions* (1880–81), both in the *Fortnightly Review*. Charlotte Brontë was almost alone among the major Victorian novelists in *not* having her work serialized, and here the long-term trend was from monthly to weekly issue. This increasingly widespread Victorian practice of publicly 'previewing' new writing clearly had a significant impact on the process of composition itself. With their ideas and narratives thus open to critical comment before their formulation was complete, writers typically took advantage of the opportunity to rework both content and form either in whole or in part. Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* represents a complex example of major revision of ideas, while Collins's *The Woman in White* and Dickens's *Great Expectations*, both serialized in the weekly *All the Year Round* in the early 1860s, represent celebrated cases of the reshaping of fiction: in the former, public criticism of the time scheme of the mystery in the *Times* review led to extensive reworking by the author, while in the latter the ending was made rather less bleak in response to private comments by Edward Bulwer Lytton on reading the serial proofs. More generally, however, the discipline of composing to serial deadlines, especially weekly ones, encouraged an increasing reliance on the mechanism of enigma and suspense, while the habit of working regularly for magazines and newspapers, unrelentingly focused on the here and now, led to a more powerful 'presence of the present' in Victorian imaginative writing (Altick 1991). Habermas thus regards 'the integration of the once separate domains of journalism and literature' (Habermas 1989: 170) as one of many symptoms of the decline from a culture-debating to a culture-consuming public.

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Moreover, as the influence of agencies like Mitchell's suggests, during the nineteenth century advertisers became increasingly significant as sources of both copy and revenue for serials of all kinds, though there was again a deal of variation according to genre of publication. Though the august and weighty bound volumes of Victorian quarterly, monthly, and weekly magazines now held in academic libraries might suggest that they were entirely devoid of commercial messages, this is only because the coloured paper wrappers carrying display advertising, plus the inserted sheaf

of notices known as the ‘Advertiser’, were stripped off and discarded prior to binding. Lighter weekly entertainment papers, also clothed in a coloured cover for commercial use, often restricted announcements in the body of the publication to the in-house variety, though this form of restraint tended to weaken over time. The established daily papers led by *The Times* long refused all display advertising as disruptive of the classical column layout, but organized hundreds of small personal and business notices into classified sections occupying the opening and closing pages. The popular and weekly journals, in contrast, rapidly took advantage of the needs of manufacturers seeking a mass market to establish a clear visual and verbal brand identity for their products: in the metropolis, the *Illustrated London News* (1842) and *Daily Mail* (1896) were both pace setters in this respect.

The use of serial publications as a medium for commercial advertising has a lengthy history, going back to at least the seventeenth century in Britain. But the introduction in 1712 of a heavy unit tax of a shilling on each advertisement in a newspaper, raised gradually and extended to other serial formats over the following century, obviously offered an incentive for businesses to exploit media not so hampered, including handbills, posters, and wall paintings. Table 30.1, however, suggests that, in the case of *The Times* at least, over the course of a century the adverse impacts of the tax were more than offset by growing demand for advertising space, with increases in the size of the paper used to prevent the proportion of advertising material exceeding a perceived maximum. The sample dates chosen are: 1788, on the adoption the current title shortly after foundation; 1818, following the raising of the advertisement tax to its maximum of 3s 6d; 1838, after the tax reduction to 1s 6d; 1858, following the abolition of the tax; and 1888, at the end of the hundred years, with the New Journalism already flourishing. As rule of thumb, nineteenth-century journals would aim to fill around half of their available space with advertising copy: on 20 June 1882, for example, the proportion of advertising in the major London dailies ranged from 45 to 63 per cent. Generally during the Victorian period, editorial/advertising balances within this range generated income from advertisers rather exceeding income from subscribers and thus resulted in a clear profit, with the social class of readership often counting as much as raw circulation (Brown 1985: 16). This thus represented the standard business model for Victorian newspapers. At the extremes of the spectrum, of course, there were both papers with little or no advertising relying on substantial subsidies from sponsors with political or religious interests, and journals dominated by advertising but with no subscription charge, the latter practice often being adopted by resort journals issued only during the holiday season, or new country journals needing a kick start (Lee 1976: 85). For many class magazines, to begin with advertising income represented not much more than an ancillary source of revenue, so that surges or slumps in sales led directly to success or failure in business terms. However, as the century progressed, even such periodicals tended to be drawn into the economics of consumerism.

One symptom of this is a blurring of the boundary between editorial and advertising material in periodicals. On the one hand, personal and classified advertising – notices of births, marriages, and deaths, of situations vacant or wanted, of books

Table 30.1 Proportion of editorial/advertising material in *The Times* relative to newspaper size, 1788–1888

<i>Year*</i>	<i>No. of Pages</i>	<i>No. of Columns</i>	<i>Proportion of Editorial Material (%)</i>	<i>Proportion of Advertising Material (%)</i>
1788	4	4	70	30
1818	4	5	49	51
1838	8	6	68	32
1858	12	6	55	45
1888	16	6	56	44

* Based in each case on the issue for the last Monday in October

recently published and plays currently performed, of auctions to be held or ships about to arrive, and the rest – could represent the most sought-after information for many modern, urban readers. Under this regime, servants seeking employment, for example, were obliged to access newspapers like *The Times* aimed at their masters. On the other, popular periodicals might often resort to techniques that would today be termed ‘advertorialising’ or ‘product placement’. For example, in the 1850s, the columns of advice to correspondents in *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper* might suggest to subscribers the health benefits of the publisher’s brand of teas or the educational advantages of his reference works packed with useful knowledge, while G. W. M. Reynolds was not averse to embedding puffs for publications from his own house within his serial novels (Law 2008: 205). Before the end of the century, the situation could approach the extreme envisaged by Karl Bücher, where the journal ‘assumes the character of an enterprise which produces advertising space as a commodity that is made marketable by means of an editorial section’ (cited in Habermas 1989: 185).

George Newnes’s *Tit-Bits* comes close to exemplifying this possibility. Though the paper began in October 1881 without covers or external advertising in the body of the issue, by the middle of the decade not only was this policy entirely reversed – with dubious patent medicines and food products such as Salt Regal or Frame Food Bread, as well as its own brand of ‘Tit-Bits Tea’ increasingly to the fore – but the paper had also turned itself into the vehicle for the most enterprising and interactive cross-media advertising campaigns of the era. Among the most audacious publicity stunts were: the ‘*Tit-Bits* Insurance Scheme’ from 1885, where each subscriber carrying a current copy of the paper and meeting a fatal railway accident would leave his or her next of kin better off by £100; and the ‘*Tit-Bits* Hospitals Fund Campaign’ of 1889, whereby, through a process of ‘cooperative philanthropy’ the proprietors would give £10,000 to the Hospitals Fund and a small reward to the ‘willing *Tit-Bits* canvassers’ recruited – if the paper’s circulation were raised above half a million (see Jackson 1997: 209–10). In such ways were readers of the bestselling periodical of the Victorian era willingly co-opted not just as consumers but even as marketing agents. Such radical confusion of public interest and private profit seems to subvert Dallas’s cheerful conclusion that, in a liberal society, ‘opinion . . . follows the known laws of supply and demand’.

PERIODICAL READERSHIP

In arguing that journals represent forms of voluntary combination for particular public ends, Dallas follows Alexis de Tocqueville in his discussion of the links between civil association and the press in *Democracy in America*, where the Frenchman concludes that a journal ‘can only exist on condition that it reproduce a doctrine or sentiment common to many men’ and thus ‘always represents an association of which its habitual readers are the members’ (Tocqueville 2000: 495). Though the flourishing of the newspaper under print capitalism has been seen as a major factor in explaining the rise of nationalism, that is, political identification with the ‘imagined community’ fostered by the modern nation-state (Anderson 1991: 22–36), the growth of periodicals both reflects and generates a far wider range of affiliations and associations, whether regional or international, religious or secular. A scan of the first substantive word of the titles listed in the *Waterloo Directory* gives an indication of the wide range of affiliations. To take the case of local identification: *Glasgow* (including equivalents like *Glaswegian*), *Edinburgh*, *Birmingham*, *Manchester* and *London* in turn account for eight, 28, 116, 159, and 389 titles; *Irish*, *Scottish*, *English*, etc. respectively total 30, 52, and 101; *National* covers 138 titles, and *British* 364, and together *Global*, *International*, and *Universal* account for 107. Altogether, though, these titles represent only around 3 per cent of the entire list.

To suggest the variety of civil association represented in periodicals, we might consider the following genres of class journals, each widely published and read: the transactions of learned society; factional political papers; trade periodicals; and the missionary press.

- Transactions represent the journal of record of a voluntary association. Dating from the mid-seventeenth century, the journals of learned or professional associations, such as the Linnaean Society or the Royal College of Physicians, had evolved by the nineteenth into lengthy annuals, typically transcribing the current constitution, regulations, accounts, and membership of the society in question, in addition to papers delivered at its general meeting. They thus came to constitute both a public declaration of the principles and an official record of the activities of bodies whose members were often geographically dispersed, and provided a convenient discursive model for pioneering intellectual and scientific bodies such as the Royal Asiatic Society (from 1823) or the Photographic Society (from 1851). Founded in London in 1823, and soon linked to existing bodies in India, the former encouraged the creation of a series of affiliated societies in other Asian locations, including Hong Kong (1847) and Japan (1872).
- Thriving in the decade following the publication of the People’s Charter in May 1838 with its demand for universal male suffrage, the Chartist press represents the best-known example of Victorian factional journalism. Led by the *Northern Star* (1837–52), which at its peak in 1839 achieved an annual circulation over 35,000, sooner or later more than a hundred radical journals, both regional and metropolitan, stamped and unstamped, gave allegiance to the aims of the Charter. While the driving force of the *Northern Star* throughout was the

physical force Chartist Feargus O'Connor, whose passionate weekly letters to readers were supplemented by extensive reporting of his campaign speeches, radicals as different as Bronterre O'Brien and Ernest Jones were active contributors at various times. Founded in Leeds but with production moving to the capital in 1844, the paper covered radical activities in Continental Europe as well as provincial Britain, thus helping to form a central focus for a political movement often fragmented and lacking in national organization.

- Representing the commercial interests of, and thus creating a sense of collective identity among, the purveyors of specific goods and services, the trade press began to flourish generally from around 1860, with the *Ironmonger* (1859) and the *Grocer* (1862) pioneering monthlies in their respective fields. In addition to providing details of market fluctuations, bankruptcies, technological or administrative innovations, and the like, plus discussion of more general news affecting the trade, these journals typically devoted a good deal of their space to correspondence from subscribers. However, there were a number of precursors in trades such as publishing, where *Bent's Literary Advertiser* (1802) led the way. As Dallas noted (1859a: I 103), the periodicals of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, the daily *Morning Advertiser* (1794) and the Sunday *Era* (1838), also have a particular historical interest since by the mid-Victorian decades they had evolved from journals narrowly serving the catering trade to become general periodicals, respectively a daily newspaper with a circulation second only to *The Times*, and the leading theatrical journal covering both metropolitan and provincial theatres.
- As we have seen, according to Mitchell's calculations, still in the 1860s well over a third of all Victorian periodicals had a declared religious affiliation. Within this broad grouping evangelical journals supporting Christian missions both abroad and at home represent a major sub-genre. Leading general titles of long standing were the Nonconformist *Evangelical Magazine* (1793–1904), founded by the London Missionary Society, and the *Christian Observer* (1802–77) of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, though there were a host of more specialized journals serving particular denominations such as the Baptists or Brethren, mission fields such as inland China or the East End of London, and readerships like Sunday school children. Key functions were the reporting of missionary news, including both conversions and martyrdoms, exemplary tales of missionary dedication, along with appeals for support in the form of prayer, donations and service. There were often active links with movements for both colonial expansion and social reform. Later in the century, evangelical bodies like the Religious Tract Society broadened their scope and issued uplifting entertainment journals such as the *Leisure Hour* (1852–1905) with no specific missionary appeal.

This brief outline, suggesting the range of affiliations and forms of association typical of four major genres of class journal, thus supports Dallas's contention that the mid-Victorian bourgeois press tended to function as 'a second representation of the third estate'.

A similar dialogic character can be found in the Victorian newspaper. The function of the newspaper press as a forum for debate on public policy and planning

can be seen most simply in the evolution of the ‘Leaders and Letters’ columns of metropolitan and provincial dailies, with *The Times* providing a fitting illustration. In the early years of Victoria’s reign, there were typically five or more leading articles, blending both news and opinion, situated in the central spread of the paper, while there were only a small handful of letters to the editor – the only signed items on view – scattered among the different departments of the paper and difficult to locate in the absence of an index. By around the middle of the reign, there was a much larger quantity of correspondence from subscribers – the norm was around 15 items, some occasionally over a column in length, on a dozen different topics – which remained departmentalized but could be easily located due to the introduction of a contents listing in the centre pages, these typically containing no more than four leaders offering an abstract of editorial opinion on the issues of the day. It was only in the 1920s, when Lord Astor had purchased the paper from the Northcliffe estate, that leaders and letters were collected on the same page under the *Times* logo, though the number and scale of leaders remained variable and there was typically a spill-over of still often lengthy correspondence on to other pages; and well after the Second World War before the page became frozen into its the current layout, with three brief leaders of standard length in a broad column down the left and a sheaf of brief letters to the editor in narrow columns to the right. Thus, there is still plenty of evidence in the mid-Victorian decades and beyond of the bourgeois periodical serving as ‘a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in a critical public debate’, a process first established more than a century earlier in journals like the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (1731) according to Habermas (1989: 60).

* * *

On the other hand, from the early Victorian decades a rather different tradition of reader participation was emerging in the mass journals, centring on ‘Answers to Correspondents’ columns and prize competitions, which could be seen as part of the process of ‘[t]he public sphere in the world of letters’ being ‘replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption’ in Habermas’s terms (1989: 160). With romantic fiction in copious quantities, the ‘Answers to Correspondents’ page was long a mainstay of the popular penny weekly miscellanies, led by the *Family Herald* and *London Journal* in the 1840s. Though the questions included requests for factual information, useful or otherwise, the majority were of a more intimate nature, revolving around personal appearance, behaviour, and relationships. In her perceptive analysis in *Blackwood’s*, Oliphant noted two curious characteristics of the phenomenon: (1) that, though the questions seemed to come from embarrassed individual subscribers, the responses were designed also to amuse readers *en masse*, thus blurring the boundaries of private and public; (2) that the apparent omniscience of the editor extended not only to matters of fact but also to questions of *etiquette*, thus constructing the readership as inferior but aspiring in class terms and echoing a recurrent theme of the papers’ serial fiction (Oliphant 1858: 210–11). As Dallas recognized in a companion article to that on periodicalism (Dallas 1859b), prize competitions for compositions by subscribers, whether prose or verse, factual or imaginative, became prominent in the 1850s in cheap

commercial weekly papers within the useful knowledge tradition, with John Cassell's *Working Man's Friend* (1850) and the Dundee *People's Journal* (1858) in the vanguard. There, though, as the titles might suggest, the papers clearly tried to encourage entries dealing with themes of proletarian or regional life, and published them alongside other expressions of reader engagement with social issues, like the regular 'People's Opinion' column (Law 2000: 46). By the 1870s, however, the reader's competition was being exploited by a much wider range of journals, including the ubiquitous weekly provincial miscellaneous newspapers that were the primary clients of syndication agencies like Tillotson's. By then the themes were often trivial, and the rewards had changed from useful books to substantial sums in cash, so that professional writers were increasingly attracted and frequently won the star prize. This process of commodification of reader involvement in the mass journals reached its apogee in papers like *Tit-Bits*.

From the start, Newnes realized that the lion's share of the many bite-sized pieces of copy for his aptly named new miscellany could be concocted both appetizingly and cheaply by readers themselves. In every issue there was thus a notice in bold capitals offering the refined and apparently generous sum of 'one guinea per column' to 'litterateurs' for original contributions. There were regular interactive features like the 'Inquiry Column' where subscribers both asked and answered examination-style questions, with the reader scoring best over a three-month period winning a reward of ten guineas. Even letters to the editor were drawn into the cash nexus in the 'Correspondence' section, with pressing social themes like 'Is Early Rising a Mistake?' or 'Who are Most Polite – Men or Women?' to the fore. There were publicity-oriented prize competitions on a far more lavish scale than ever before, such as the '*Tit-Bits* Villa Competition' of 1884, where more than 20,000 entries were received, and many more readers made a daytrip to Dulwich to inspect the *bijou* residence on offer, each purchasing a souvenir postcard to celebrate the outing. There was also a substantial 'Answers to Correspondents' department run by the proprietor himself. In 'conveying a sense of editorial presence and reader involvement', this soon became 'the linchpin of the interactive posture that Newnes adopted' (Jackson 1997: 206), a truth wryly acknowledged by Harmsworth when he founded a rival journal under the title *Answers to Correspondents* (1888). In both cases, the editorial identity thus constructed was chummy, personal, comic, self-dramatizing, very different from the rather distant, stern, condescending, and schoolmasterly style of earlier manifestations in the *London Journal* and the like. In short, the forms of editor-subscriber interaction found in the late Victorian mass-market periodical fostered as little critical sense as the audience vote-off in 'Reality TV' shows such as *Big Brother* or *American Idol*.

When the New Journalism was political and investigative, it tended to be the opposite of participatory. This can be seen starkly in the editorial career of W. T. Stead, who founded the *Review of Reviews* with Newnes in 1890. When the two parted company after only a matter of months, Newnes contrasted his own style of journalism, offering 'wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hardworking people', with that of Stead, which 'directs the affairs of nations . . . makes and unmakes cabinets' (cited in Jackson 1997: 201). The article 'Government by Journalism' represents Stead's stoutest defense of the press as 'fourth estate'.

There, the readership of a mass journal is not imagined as a form of active association or critical community but rather as an idealized representation of ‘the national mind’ (Stead 1886a: 654), that is, a reification of ‘the democracy’ *en masse*. The editor is thus not envisaged as in dialogue with his subscribers, but rather as an apostolic, visionary, demagogic leader of the people and guardian of the law. But the superiority of the press over parliament as representative of the people is due precisely to its entry into the cash nexus:

The member [of parliament] speaks in the name of a community by virtue of a mandate conferred on poll-days, when a majority of the electors, half of whom may have subsequently changed their minds, marked a cross opposite his name. The editor’s mandate is renewed day by day, and his electors register their vote by a voluntary payment of the daily pence. There is no limitation of age or sex. Whosoever has a penny has a vote . . .

(Stead 1886a: 655)

Under the New Journalism, the periodical reader is thus converted from public citizen to private consumer.

* * *

Victorian periodicalism can be seen as part of a wider serial revolution involving a rapid expansion in the production, distribution, and consumption of not only newspapers and magazines but also works of reference, history, fiction, etc. issued in installments (Law and Patten 2009). This serial boom is the clearest evidence of the emergence of print-capitalism in Britain, that is, of the shift from petty commodity-text to commodity-text production (Feltes 1986: 1–17). Yet serial publication facilitated not only the transformation of texts into commodities but also the creation of communities of subscribers. The Victorian periodical thus revealed complex properties, and was capable of constructing its readers either as public citizens or as private consumers. When Dallas was writing, it still seemed possible to imagine the former function as dominant, but by the turn of the twentieth century the periodical press was increasingly functioning to undermine ‘the coherence of the public as a critically debating entity’ (Habermas 1989: 162).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE GLOBAL COMMON READER



Jonathan Rose

Indulekha, by Oyyarattu Chandumenon, was the first novel published in Malayalam, a language of South India. The title character is a feminist heroine who reads, a habit that clearly unsettles her uncles. To read manuscripts of the *Ramayana* or the *Bhagavad Gita* would be one thing, but *Indulekha* is reading *printed* books. As a genre, the novel was not indigenous to India: it was imported by English colonizers but enthusiastically adopted by Indians, who began producing novels in their own languages around the time of the Sepoy Mutiny. Benjamin Disraeli's *Henrietta Temple* (1837) was probably the model for *Indulekha* (1890), which was an immediate local success in Calicut and soon published in English in Madras (Fraser 2008: 53–54). A few years earlier, Krupa Sathianadhan had become the first Indian woman to write a novel in English: *Saguna* (1887–88) is also the story of a New Woman, though she prefers to read George Eliot.

In his pioneering 1957 study *The English Common Reader*, Richard Altick described the creation of a mass reading public, but as the above examples illustrate, this revolution was not limited to Britain. The nineteenth century saw the development of a global reading community that consumed literature across national boundaries. This commerce was greatly facilitated by the lack of an international copyright agreement: the Berne Convention was not effective until 1887, with Japan remaining outside until 1899, and the United States enacting its own law (the Chace Act) in 1891. The main book exporting nations were Britain, France, and Germany, with the United States far behind but gaining rapidly.

In *The World Republic of Letters* Pascale Casanova characterizes this regime as a form of cultural imperialism, under which Western Europeans – Parisians especially – decided which books were worthy of reaching an international audience. However, the reality was rather more complicated and not so pernicious. Granted, in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth centuries, British and French writers enjoyed tremendous advantages over their counterparts in Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and Australasia. The former had far better opportunities to earn a living from the pen, and much greater access to readers worldwide. But everyone benefited from the globalization of the book. Western European publishers supplied reading matter to nations that did not yet have large native publishing

industries, and these exports were driven by authentic and enthusiastic consumer demand. Readers in what we now call ‘the developing world’ appropriated and adapted Western literature to their own cultures, and used it to fertilize the growth of their own national literatures.

One small country on the periphery of Europe, which had never yet enjoyed national independence, offers a case study in the internationalization of the book trade. One of the first true bookshops in Helsinki was opened in 1823 by Gustaf Wasenius. At the time an observer estimated that Finland had no more than 30,000 book readers, with a maximum of 400 potential customers for scientific works and 3,000 for novels, many of them living far from the capital. Given those limits, Wasenius could only succeed by building a network of contacts with foreign publishers, booksellers, and distributors. At first he naturally turned to Sweden, which until the Napoleonic Wars had ruled Finland; though the country was now part of the Russian Empire, Swedish was still the language of the educated classes. His prime supplier in Stockholm was Zacharias Hæggström, who translated and published biographies of Napoleon, French fiction, and Walter Scott’s novels. In 1834 Lars Johan Hierta scooped the Swedish book trade with his *Läsebibliothek* (Reading Library), a series of 45 translated novels, many by James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Walter Scott. In a market where the usual print run was 500, Hierta had 2,500 subscribers, and Wasenius took 300 copies of each title. He also imported Danish books from the firm of Gyldendal (Copenhagen) and German books from Johan Friedrich Leich (Leipzig). French works he obtained from Bossange’s, the largest bookseller in France, with branches in Mexico, Rio de Janeiro, and Montreal. But he eventually found it cheaper to import editions of Victor Hugo, Balzac, and Eugène Sue from unauthorized publishers in Switzerland and Belgium. (French publishers might call these ‘pirated’ books, but before the Berne Convention they were perfectly legal.) Nearly all educated Finnish readers were literate in French, German, Swedish, and/or Danish, and Wasenius supplied them with books in all of these languages (Hakapää 2002: 39–66).

One literary commodity, perhaps more than any other, drove this process of globalization: the Waverley Novels. By 1851 at least 22 French publishers had translated Scott. He became the second most widely stocked author in Paris *cabinets de lecture*, edged out only by Madame de Genlis, and by the 1860s he was still one of the most frequently borrowed writers in French public libraries. By 1845 Leipzig publishers had produced more than 200 editions of his works, as well as some German novels imitating his style. In Germanophone circulating libraries he was by far the most available foreign author. His novels resonated with Italians involved in the Risorgimento, and the London firm of Rudolph Ackermann exported *Ivanhoe* and *El Talismán* to the newly independent republics of Latin America (Bell 2007: 435–38). Scott would also transform the United States literary marketplace, which before 1800 concentrated on publications for local markets (mainly newspapers and almanacs). As Emily Todd has shown, he impelled American publishers to learn how to reprint British novels and sell them to a national readership. In their highly successful efforts to market the Waverley novels, Matthew Carey and others developed the machinery of production, distribution, and publicity necessary to reach a mass reading public.

‘Books, like invisible scouts, permeate the whole habitable globe’, Thomas Carlyle observed in *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), ‘and Timbuctoo itself is not safe from British Literature’. Likewise Boston and New York: promoted by Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Sartor Resartus* was published in 17 American editions between 1836 and 1878. The book itself is about (among many other things) the problematic business of transmitting literature across linguistic boundaries, with an anonymous English editor struggling to make sense of Professor Teufelsdröckh’s chaotic literary remains. Some American readers found it indecipherable: ‘a heap of clotted nonsense’, snorted the *New York Sun* (Jackson 1999: 147). But it enjoyed a passionate audience among all classes, including businessmen and Lowell millgirls. Clergymen of many various denominations, from Calvinists to Unitarians, found it a revelation, although (or perhaps because) Teufelsdröckh’s theology was very difficult to pin down. ‘What . . . are Carlyle’s religious sentiments? Is he a Pantheist? Is he a Transcendentalist? Infidel? Atheist? Deist?’ wondered one reviewer in 1842. ‘It would be easy to prove, by detached passages that he is *either* or *all* of these; and as easy by the same process to prove that he is *neither*’ (Jackson 1999: 158). And that indeterminacy may account for Carlyle’s popularity in a country that had no established church, where dozens of sects competed for parishioners, who were free to order their own salvation *à la carte*. As one Unitarian journal put it,

While reading the various works of Thomas Carlyle, we have marked all the passages which have appeared to us as particularly striking – some for their eloquence, some for their wit, some for their eccentricity, some for their poetry, some for their noble moral tone, and some for their pungent moral satire’. Like most American readers, ‘we like him *in parts*, and so taken, none may dislike him.
(Jackson 1999: 158)

In October 1848 the *North American Review* reported that ‘the New England states were visited by a distressing mental epidemic, passing under the name of the “Jane Eyre fever,” which defied all the usual nostrums of the established doctors of criticism’ (LeFavour 2004: 120). The mania swiftly spread to all parts of the country, with several regional publishers bringing out competing editions: Harper & Brothers (New York), T. B. Peterson (Philadelphia), William D. Ticknor & Co. (Boston), H. B. Pearson (Cincinnati), and Wilkins, Carter & Co. (Boston). That free market, unburdened by royalty payments, and insatiable public demand drove down the price: Harper and Pearson sold it for 25 cents, compared to the usual \$1.25 for an American novel. According to a contemporary estimate, it sold 80,000 copies within five years. The initial mystery surrounding the identities of the Brontë novelists only boosted sales, but most critics and readers immediately recognized something special in *Jane Eyre*, even if they were wrong about the author’s gender. ‘As a novelist’, proclaimed the *National Era*, ‘he stands alone as the imitator of nobody’, while Charles Dana praised the book for ‘its manly vigor of style’. ‘There seems to be as much mystery about the author as there was about the Great Unknown’, observed *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. ‘But, man or woman, Currer Bell or Harriet Martineau, he or she is the novelist of the hour’ (LeFavour 2004: 118–19). For the next decade at least, this work became a benchmark for American critics and blurb writers: novels were ‘recommended as equal to *Jane Eyre*’ or judged ‘not so interesting as *Jane Eyre*’ (LeFavour 2004: 120).

However, the most popular American novelist of the nineteenth century was clearly Charles Dickens. His first tour of the United States inspired a frenzy that has never been matched by any other English visitor, with the possible exception of the Beatles. As one young North Carolina woman gushed:

Aunt Emma! Aunt Emma! Aunt Emma!!! Seen Dickens!, shaken hands with Dickens!! Sent Dickens flowers!!! RECEIVED A NOTE FROM DICKENS!!!! OH ME! OH ME! Oh me! . . . Don't you feel as if you had seen Oliver, & Dick Snivell, & the Marchioness, & Sully Gross, and Slike, & didn't you feel like asking Dickens about them – just as if they were real people, & getting him to tell you something more of little Nell and the old schoolmaster?

(McParland 2010: 176)

His catchphrases became American colloquialisms: 'Please, sir, I want some more' was a favourite. When panhandlers rushed to the west in pursuit of gold, a lawyer quipped that they were, 'like Mr. Micawber . . . waiting for something to turn up'. The philosopher Orestes Brownson gave the phrase a more Transcendentalist spin: 'Something, as Micawber was to say, "might turn up" and out of the seeming darkness, light might at length shine'. And in August 1864, when Confederate forces were in retreat, General Ulysses S. Grant wrote:

I have no doubt but the enemy are exceedingly anxious to hold out until after the presidential election. They have many hopes from its effects. They hope a counter-revolution: they hope to elect a peace candidate; in fact, like Micawber, they hope for something to turn up.

(McParland 2010: 21-23)

They all safely assumed that everyone would understand the allusion. Dickens appealed to all sections of American society: men and women, whites and blacks, immigrants and the native born, Southerners and Northerners. That last point is confirmed by soldiers' letters and diaries on both sides of the Civil War, as well as by publishers' ledgers: in January 1856 Chapman and Hall shipped 468 copies of *Oliver Twist* to New York and 1,898 to New Orleans.

In the other direction, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reportedly sold a million copies in Britain in 1852, compared with 300,000 at home. But for a long time America was a net importer of literature. *Littell's Living Age* was a popular weekly that filled its pages with articles reprinted from British journals, without permission. The first issue (May 1844) stole freely from the *Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's*, the *London Magazine*, the *Dublin University Magazine*, and *Punch*. Of the eight bestselling books in the United States in 1848, only one was by an American, John Greenleaf Whittier's *Poems*. One was Danish (Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales*) and the rest were all British: *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Dombey and Son*, *Vanity Fair*, Macaulay's *History of England*, and Grace Aguilar's *Home Influence*.

Americans also read Continental books, even when they were not available in translation. Ronald and Mary Zboray have discovered a surprising number of nineteenth-century New England women who translated European literature for their own amusement and edification. One of them, a student at the Agassiz School in Cambridge, read Friedrich Schiller's *Song of the Bell* and F. H. K.

La Motte-Foqué's *Undine*. A second, at Miss Porter's School, tackled Cicero, Émile Souvestre's *Un philosophe sous les toits*, and Schiller's *Wallenstein*. A third, while ministering to a sick aunt, taught herself enough Spanish to read Leandro Fernández de Moratín's comedies and Francisco Brotons's *Las Ruinas de Santa Engracia*. And Charlotte Forten, a black normal school graduate, self-translated Caesar's *Commentaries*, Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie*, and Madame de Staël's *Corinne*.

Since the era of the Elizabethan sea dogs, England had coveted the vast Latin American market. In the 1820s, when most of Hispanophone America asserted its independence from Spain, British book exports to those countries surged, though they declined later, largely as a result of piracy by French and South American printers. Latin Americans, hungry for foreign books, had no compelling motive to enact copyright laws: Mexico did not do so until 1846. The French supplied mainly works of literature, whereas the British exported more scientific and educational texts. There was plenty of pent-up demand for both, because Spanish censorship had largely (though never entirely) kept the Enlightenment out of the Continent. That demand was met by 'Ackermann's Catechisms', small books that were structured like Catholic catechisms but secular in content, teaching the basics of history, mathematics, and modern science. Rudolph Ackermann was a German with a reading knowledge of Spanish who settled in London and made a fortune as a publisher. He had numerous personal contacts with Latin American diplomats and émigré Spanish liberals resident in London, who served him as advisors, authors, and translators. His publications inspired a whole generation of autodidacts. Domingo Sarmiento, who rose from poverty to become president of Argentina (1868–74) and a vigorous educational reformer, recalled their impact:

... Peoples, history, geography, religion, morals, politics, all that was already written [in my mind] as in an index; I lacked however the book which dealt with them, I felt alone in the world. . . . But there must be books, I said to myself, especially about those matters, for children; and, understanding them well, one can learn with no need of teachers; and I launched myself in search of those books, and in that remote province, at that hour of my resolution, I found what I was looking for, just as I had conceived it, prepared by patriots who loved America and who, from London, had provided for that South American need for education, answering my clamor: *Ackermann's catechisms*. . . . I have found them! I could shout like Archimedes, because I had foreseen them, invented them, looked for such catechisms . . .

(Roldán Vera 2003: 187)

Spanish Americans remained largely dependent on foreign books because they had yet to develop publishing industries of their own. The Cuban poet José María Heredia published two editions of his poems, in New York (1825) and Mexico (1832), for a total press run of no more than 400 copies. That was all that the Cuban reading public could absorb: at the time the island had a literacy rate of just 15 per cent, out of a population of 700,000. By the 1840s Cuban newspapers had a total circulation of only 5,000, and they serialized mostly European novels. José Martí (1853–95), the celebrated revolutionary, was also a prolific author, but few of his writings were published in Cuba in his lifetime. As late as 1882 the

historian Ernesto Quesada protested that even in Argentina, a relatively well-developed Latin American country:

there are no publishers – with a few rare exceptions – that can be called properly so, that is, people who conceive of such and such enterprise, ask such and such writer to write a book or an article in a certain way, pay him for the work, print it, disseminate it and sell it to his advantage. Only with those publishers would national literature have a true impulse; only that way intellectual work, one of the most difficult jobs that requires a considerable capital of previous knowledge, would be remunerated and stimulated. Only then could we have the profession of ‘man of letters’, the man who lives on his pen and his knowledge.

(Roldán Vera 2003: 41)

But international firms like Ackermann’s could supply a platform for writers in underdeveloped literary economies. In 1865 Franz Lipperheide, a Berlin publisher, launched *Die Modenwelt*, a women’s magazine reporting on Paris fashions, and not just to a German audience. Over the next two decades he developed no fewer than 20 versions of the journal, for the Netherlands (*De Bazar*), Hungary (*Budapesti Bazár*), Denmark (*Dagmar*), France (*La Saison*), Sweden (*Freja*), the Czech provinces (*Modni Svet*), Britain (*The Season*), Spain (*La Estación*), Italy (*La Stagione*), Poland (*Tygonik Mód I Powieści*), the United States, Spanish America, Belgium, Switzerland, and Russia. Lipperheide pioneered the multinational publishing strategy pursued today by *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, with great success. Although each of his editions translated material from *Die Modenwelt*, they could also provide venues for local authors. The Brazilian version, *A Estação*, included a literary supplement, edited in Brazil, which featured the work of Machado de Assis, Artur Azevedo, and many other native writers (Fraser and Hammond 2008: 2: 67–88).

Starting in the 1770s, British presses in India published Indian literary and religious classics, in translation or the original languages, spurring what Raymond Schwab called ‘The Oriental Renaissance’. For a time, Harish Trivedi notes, ‘The traffic in books and knowledge was nearly all one-way, from the margin to the centre’ (Fraser and Hammond 2008: 2:15). This cultural flow would be largely reversed in the Victorian era, but even then, British and American missionaries promoted native literatures. They played a key role in establishing Assamese as a recognized national language, producing its grammars, its dictionaries, its first Bible translation, and (in 1846) its first monthly periodical.

In India, the ‘common reader’ was uncommon: in 1881 only 6.6 per cent of Indian males and 0.3 per cent of Indian females were literate, and the proportion literate in English was much smaller. But the subcontinent was nevertheless an important and growing literary market. Between 1886 and 1901 there was a sharp increase in the number of libraries and reading rooms, from 49 to 137 in Bengal, and from 13 to 70 in the Bombay Presidency. In 1864, £330,000 worth of English-language literature was imported into India, up from £150,000 in 1850 (Joshi 2002: 38–53). British publishers responded by marketing a series of cheap books to the colonies, including Murray’s Colonial and Home Library (launched 1843), Bentley’s

Empire Library (1878), and Kegan Paul's Indian and Colonial Library (1887). The most successful was Macmillan's Colonial Library (1886), which had published 680 titles (mostly fiction) by 1916. These books could be sold to both British colonists and Anglophone Indians, and by the 1880s the latter market was overtaking the former and expanding rapidly: that much is suggested by the growth of English-language newspapers for Indians (Joshi 2002: 96–121).

Indian libraries commonly stocked Scott, Dickens, Disraeli, and Thackeray. *Gulliver's Travels* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* were translated into several Indian languages: after all, both satirized European pretensions to cultural superiority. But if we ask which novelist was most frequently translated for Indian readers, the surprise winner, by a large margin, is G. W. M. Reynolds. The most popular author in Macmillan's Colonial Library was one of its editorial advisors, F. Marion Crawford. Reynolds was English, Crawford an American who knew upwards of 20 languages and edited an Indian newspaper. Today their works are considered trashy implausible melodrama, a far cry from the realist nineteenth-century fiction now studied in universities. But 'realist' English fiction did not resonate with Indian readers, simply because English realities were not Indian realities. The factory novels of Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell were irrelevant to a preindustrial society, and what could the parliamentary novels of Disraeli and Trollope mean to a country with no parliament? The hoary melodramatic devices of coincidence, elaborate plots, moral certitudes, romanticism, didacticism, and oratorical denunciations of injustice were all common and familiar in Indian literary traditions. Seeking romance and fantasy, Indian readers devoured Reynolds and Crawford, as well as translations of *The Arabian Nights*, Cervantes, and Jules Verne (Joshi 2002: 68–92, 121–33).

After the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress* may be the most global book ever published. Isabel Hofmeyr has counted about 200 translations, including about 20 in European languages, 24 in the Indian subcontinent, 11 in the Pacific, nine in Southeast Asia, eight in the Middle East, and five in China, as well as Cree, Dakota, and Eskimo. Sub-Saharan Africa was by the far the largest field for translations, carried out mostly by British, American, and European missionary societies. The first was produced in Madagascar in 1835, after the Queen of the Merina ordered the persecution of Christian converts and the expulsion of missionaries. One missionary wrote a translation of part of the text, from which converts produced a few more handwritten copies. 'O God', one convert wrote, 'do thou enable us to make the progress that Pilgrim made, and if thy kingdom in Madagascar is to be advanced by these means be it so' (Hofmeyr 2004: 67). Evangelical papers throughout the world electrified their readers with this inspirational story of African martyrs sustained by Bunyan's great work, which apparently transcended all ethnic, racial, and cultural boundaries. Additional translations soon followed: Tswana (1848), Yoruba (1866), Zulu (1868), Xhosa (1868), Efik (1868), Sotho (1872), Ashanti (1885), Duala (1885), Benga (1886), Fante (1886), Swahili (1888), Amharic (1892), Lingala (1894), Nyanja (1894), Ganda (1896), Kamba (1897), and Kongo (1897).

Of 37 identifiable authors of African translations, ten were black, and the white translators were often assisted by native converts. The Xhosa version was produced by Tiyo Soga, a native Presbyterian missionary in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. He was a graduate of the Lovedale Missionary Institution, a school that trained

the Xhosa Christian elite, published his translation, and made it required reading for its students. It was still in print in the twenty-first century. Critic A. C. Jordan has compared its influence on Xhosa literature to the impact of the King James Bible on English literature.

As an allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* resembled African folktales and riddles, and it could easily be read as a metaphorical denunciation of slavery, imperialism, and white supremacy. One striking example comes from the 1880s, when some Cape Colony Africans enjoyed the right to vote in elections, though nearly all the candidates were white. A columnist in a Xhosa newspaper reminded his readers of Giant Despair, who imprisoned Christian and Hopeful in a dungeon, beat them mercilessly, and then advised them to commit suicide. 'But they, though tempted by his counsel, finally resolved not to accept it. *If they must die, it must not be by their own hands.*' Now the Xhosa were being asked to vote for the same white politicians who had imposed pass laws and residential segregation on them. 'For our part', the columnist concluded, 'we say we must not accept the counsel to do away with our own selves. If we must die, it must not be by our own hands' (Hofmeyr 2004: 128–29). In important ways, *Pilgrim's Progress* had become an African book.

Black Americans, who by 1900 had achieved a 55 per cent literacy rate, found world literature no less emancipating. As a young woman Ida B. Wells, who became a militant anti-lynching activist, adored Shakespeare, Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, *Ivanhoe*, *Les Misérables*, and H. Rider Haggard's *She*. 'But', she later recalled, 'I had never read a Negro book or anything about Negroes' (Sicherman 2010: 224). She may not have been typical in that respect: *Frederick Douglass' Paper* published and reviewed black writers alongside Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Walter Scott, and Felicia Hemens. Douglass also serialized *Bleak House*, perhaps because he recognized that Dickens too was denouncing a form of human bondage. Elizabeth McHenry has discovered many African-American literary circles that read both black and white writers. Addressing one such group in Boston in 1902, George W. Forbes (a graduate of Amherst College) recommended the following 'best' authors: Homer, Pindar, Sappho, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, and Browning. There were no black poets on the list, but Forbes's message was clear: reading the classics of global literature would help to create a distinctively African-American literature. One member of his audience was inspired to hope that 'the great American epic of the joys and sorrows of our blood and kindred, of those who have gone before us would one day be written' (McHenry 2002: 173–74).

Before the advent of the sewing machine, women commonly spent long hours in sewing circles, and often designated one member of the group to read aloud to the others. Ronald and Mary Zboray have found that New England seamstresses enjoyed some formidable literature, including Pope, Cowper, Byron, Carlyle's *Life of Friedrich Schiller*, Andrew Combe's *Physiology of Digestion*, Thomas De Quincey's *Klosterheim*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. This was a common practice in workplaces that were still free from the deafening roar of industrial machinery. Cigar workers in the Caribbean basin usually enjoyed the services of a *lector*, who read from books and magazines as they worked. In Nilo Cruz's 2003 play *Anna in the Tropics*, Tampa cigar men find inspiration in *Anna Karenina*. One actual

lector transfixed 400 Havana cigarmakers with *Hedda Gabler*: ‘For two hours, those men lived the life of that woman who was too vivacious to suffer respectability and boredom, too much the coward to dare to live a bohemian, uncertain life’ (Tinajero 2010: 40). More often the *lectores* read Hispanophone newspapers and literature, but they also offered translations of Victor Hugo, Rudyard Kipling, Schopenhauer, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, Hermann Sudermann, and Karl Marx. The premium ‘Monte Cristo’ cigar was named after the Alexandre Dumas novel, one of the cigarmakers’ favourites.

Perhaps the dislocating experience of migration opened the minds of readers to global literature. On New York’s Lower East Side, Rose Cohen, a young Jewish immigrant, discovered books from all over the world that spoke to her experience of poverty and promised liberation: *Silas Marner*, Olive Schreiner’s *Dreams*, Nicholai Chernyshevsky’s revolutionary novel *What Is to Be Done?*, and, in translation, *David ben David* (*Kopperfild*). Also available in Yiddish before 1902 were *Der Koyfman fun Venedik* (*The Merchant of Venice*), *Otello*, *Don Quixote*, *Die riesen Guliver’s*, *Robinzohn* (*Robinson Crusoe*), *Ivanhoey*, *Di kamelyendame* (*Dame aux camélias*), *Di shklaveray* (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), and *Eyne vunderbare rayze arum di velt* (*Around the World in Eighty Days*).

In Russia, the appetite for Western literature was insatiable. Between 1843 and 1863 imports of foreign books and journals quintupled, from 534,372 copies to 2,727,302. By the latter date, roughly a third of the stock of Bazunov’s great bookshop in St Petersburg was Western. As Marianna Tax Choldin has noted:

Pushkin read and was strongly influenced by Byron, Sterne, and Hoffmann, and he and other writers of the period were much taken with Sir Walter Scott and his ‘Waverley’ novels. In the 1830s and 1840s the dramas of Schiller and especially of Shakespeare were popular. The importance of George Sand and Balzac for the development of the great Russian realistic novels cannot be overestimated, and Turgenev’s exposure to Merimée, Flaubert, and other French writers in Paris certainly affected his own writing. The poet and critic Apollyon Grigor’ev was very partial to Byron, Victor Hugo, Schiller, Carlyle, Emerson, and Michelet. In the 1860s and 1870s, translations of Byron, Béranger, and Heine enjoyed great popularity; according to Mirsky, the latter two were ‘more popular with the wide mass of the intelligentsia than any Russian poet’.

(Choldin 1985: 147)

Censorship regulations were adopted in 1828 and remained in effect until the 1917 Revolution, though they were relaxed in the 1860s, during Alexander II’s experiment in *glasnost*, and again after the 1905 Revolution. Auguste Comte’s *Système de politique positive* was proscribed for advocating what the censor called ‘the most dangerous sort of utopia, perhaps more to be feared than communism and socialism taken together’ (Choldin 1985: 48). George Sand was blocked because she was clearly ‘against the institution of marriage, which is in her eyes tyranny, while adultery is a return to the inalienable right of women to freedom’ (Choldin 1985: 49). Balzac’s *La Cousine Bette* simply made the censor throw up his hands: ‘It would take too long to itemize here all the abominations contained

in this book . . .’ (Choldin 1985: 52). In 1895 the censor admitted that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* only alluded vaguely to immoral activities, but ‘now, after the author has been sentenced to hard labor [for homosexual acts], the reader will be able to understand them unambiguously’ (Choldin 1985: 111).

Following a pattern that seems to be a constant in the history of censorship, elites were often allowed to read subversive literature that was not permitted to the masses. Ernest Renan’s *Le vie de Jésus* was ‘written in a popular style and thus can do more harm than [a] strictly scholarly book’, warned the chief censor, who made it available only to ‘a few people who, by virtue of their positions, enjoy the trust of the government’ (Choldin 1985: 68). Thus *On the Origin of Species* was permitted, but popularizers of Darwinism (such as T. H. Huxley) often ran into trouble. The same logic led to the approval of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* and *Das Elend der Philosophie*: after all, explained the censor, ‘the subject of the [latter] cannot be applied to Russia and presents rather abstract speculations’ (Choldin 1985: 50–51). In 1858 the Foreign Censorship Committee in St Petersburg voted to outlaw the novel *Die Fürstin der siebenten Werst*, not realizing that the author, August Theodor Grimm, was currently tutor to the Czarevitch and reading the book aloud to the Czarina. (The committee chair promptly reversed the decision.)

The reports of Czarist censors offer a revealing guide to Russian reading tastes. Happily, the system was so inefficient that outlawed literature inevitably enjoyed a wide audience. One official found obvious difficulties with *Les Misérables* but warned that an outright ban would be self-defeating:

Banned books do ultimately reach the public (since there are no books which you could not get in St. Petersburg if you wanted them), and in this case they would have added attraction in the eyes of readers due to their secret fame and the splendor of forbidden fruit.

(Choldin 1985: 85)

August Bebel’s *Die Frau in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft* was proscribed in 1884, but it inspired a generation of Russian feminists anyway. Friedrich Nietzsche was formally suppressed until 1906, but a Russian Nietzsche cult flourished nonetheless, promoted by critics, novelists, and (after 1898) Russian translations of his works. Bans against Heine and Shelley were eventually lifted, on the rationale that their works had at last attained the status of classics. A revolutionary imprisoned in Kazan in the 1860s freely borrowed secularist and socialist books from the university library, including Friedrich Engels’s *Condition of the Working Classes in England*. He was even allowed to visit a local bookshop (accompanied by a guard) and purchase two volumes there. Isabel Hapgood, the American translator of Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gorky, dealt with censorship simply by striding into government offices and demanding the literature she wanted. The response was usually an amiable *Nitchevo* (‘That’s all right’). In practice, she concluded, Czarist Russia was not much worse than the Boston Public Library (Choldin 1985: 224).

Once the Japanese ended their cultural isolation, they rushed to import not only Western literature but also a distinctively Western literary genre: the newspaper. In the Tokugawa era news had been communicated through *kawaraban*, similar to European broadsides, but the concept of printed journals issued at regular intervals was quite novel, something that the first Japanese visitors to the West

found fascinating and worth copying. When the Meiji Restoration took place on 3 January 1868, there were no true Japanese newspapers to report it, though the first experimental journals began to appear within a few months. The press was subject to government regulation, but an 1869 law specifically permitted the publication of news from abroad and translated foreign literature. As early as 1875 the *Hiragana Eiri Shimibun* (Illustrated Phonetic Newspaper) published the story of *Hamlet* in three parts; other papers followed with tales adapted from Calderón, Corneille, Molière, and Ibsen. When journalists debated the virtues of representative government and press freedom, they cited Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill. At the end of the century the largest newspapers were connecting with global information networks, establishing corps of foreign correspondents and printing dispatches from Reuters (Huffman 1997). By then there was some press grumbling against *ōkashugi* (which could be translated as ‘Eurocentrism’), but serialized translations of Western novels were hugely popular and a sure circulation booster. Thus Japanese newspaper readers were introduced to Benjamin Disraeli’s *Contarini Fleming* (1887), Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book* (1891), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* (1892), Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1892), Zola’s *Le faute de l’abbé Mouret* (1893), and Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1894), along with popular romances and mysteries by Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Bertha M. Clay (Law and Morita 2003: 109–25).

Many of the most successful global distributors of English literature were not British. Bernhard Tauchnitz’s Collection of British Authors, launched in 1842 from Leipzig, offered paperbacks selling for as little as one-tenth the price of authorized British editions. By 1937 more than 5,000 titles had been published and more than 40 million copies were sold, mainly to Continental Europe. In France Louis Hachette copied the successful methods of W. H. Smith, setting up a network of railway bookstalls and, in 1853, starting his own series of cheap novels for travellers. His Railway Library published the standard French authors, but also Swift, Defoe, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Poe, Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Goethe, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, and Cervantes. He sold 100,000 copies of *David Copperfield*, and 83,000 of *Oliver Twist* (DeMarco 2006).

In 1887 Australian Edward Petherick launched his London-based Colonial Booksellers’ Agency. Its aim was to supply books to bookshops and readers not just in the British Empire, but anywhere in the world – ‘a Victorian Amazon.com’, as Alison Rukavina has put it (Rukavina 2010: 105). Seven years later the firm was bankrupt, but not for lack of business: Petherick claimed he had distributed £250,000 worth of books. Rather, by then London publishers had developed their own distribution networks to serve the rapidly growing global market, and decided to cut out the middleman.

Between 1870 and 1884 Australian imports of British books quadrupled, and in 1889 Australia became the largest export market for British publishers, overtaking the United States. But the commerce was not all in one direction: novels now recognized as early Australian classics benefited from this metropolitan connection. Marcus Clarke’s convict novel *His Natural Life* was first produced in one volume by the Melbourne bookseller George Robertson in 1874, when copyright laws did not protect it beyond the boundaries of Victoria. The following year the London publisher Richard Bentley brought out a conventional three-volume edition, priced at the usual 31s. 6d., aimed mainly at that great engine of

nineteenth-century book distribution, Mudie's Circulating Library. Bentley then published two 6s. editions, for Britain (1878) and Australia (1882). In 1885 Bentley launched his "Colonial Library", volumes selling to the imperial market for 2s. 6d. The first in the series was *His Natural Life*, which sold 41,376 copies by 1898. Likewise, *Robbery Under Arms* by 'Rolf Boldrewood' was first serialized in the *Sydney Mail* in 1882–83. Boldrewood was in fact Thomas Alexander Browne, a respectable New South Wales judge, and his thrilling story was based on the exploits of real bushrangers. The London firm of Remington brought it out as a three-decker in 1888, and the following year Tauchnitz issued a cheap edition for the European market. Republished by Macmillan in its own Colonial Library in 1889, and then in a sixpenny edition in 1898, it would sell more than a half million copies, the majority of them in the colonial market. Boldrewood would eventually publish 18 titles in Macmillan's Colonial Library, broadcasting his work throughout the Anglophone world (Eggert 2003: 127–46).

As the century progressed, America became an increasingly important literary exporter. Walt Whitman was introduced to Germany in 1868 by Ferdinand Freiligrath, a revolutionary who clearly found a kindred spirit in the wild poet. His encomium, published in the respectable *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, was, in a word, Whitmanesque:

WALT WHITMAN! Who is Walt Whitman?

The answer is, a poet! A new American poet! His admirers say, the only poet America has as yet produced. . . . No follower in the beaten track of the European muse, but fresh from the prairie and the new settlements, fresh from the coast and the great watercourses, fresh from the thronging humanity of the seaports and cities, fresh from the battlefields of the South, and from the earthy smells in hair and beard and clothing of the soil from which he sprang.
(Grünzweig 1995: 12–13)

This sums up Whitman's appeal to the leftward half of the German reading public, a cult that survived two world wars. But translation involves selection, and the first Whitman poems that Freiligrath chose to translate were all drawn from *Drum-Taps*. At the time German nationalists viewed the American Civil War in terms similar to their own 1848 Revolution and the 1866 war against Austria: wars of brother against brother, fought for the noble cause of national unity and democracy. Whitman's war poems naturally resonated with this audience, even if they overemphasized his martial side. Freiligrath also faced a problem that would bedevil all of Whitman's German translators – how to render his barbaric yawns into proper *gymnasium* German – and the results were usually tame. In 1877 another translator produced 'Wach' auf, mein guter Kapitän', which rhymed more regularly than 'O Captain! My Captain!', but could not recapture the anguished howl.

Translation also inevitably involves rewriting. The first French versions of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* appeared respectively in 1884 and 1886, and were clearly aimed at the school textbook market. By 1881 the Jules Ferry laws had made public schools free, compulsory, and secular, the ideological foundation of the Third Republic. Parisian educational bureaucrats had to deal with the suspicions

of provincial peasants, many of whom preferred that their children be schooled as Catholics or not at all. The translator, William-Little Hughes, worked for the French Ministry of the Interior, and his translations were skewed accordingly. *Tom Sawyer* characterizes itself as ‘the history of a boy’, but in French this is significantly altered to ‘l’histoire d’un écolier’ – a schoolboy. In the original, Huckleberry Finn’s mother is illiterate; in the translation she teaches him to read and write. And when Huckleberry expresses sceptical views concerning the value of schooling, Tom interjects: ‘Quand on est riche il faut bien savoir lire et écrire, autrement tout le monde te volerait’ (‘When you’re rich, you have to know how to read and write; otherwise everyone would be robbing you’), a sentence Mark Twain never actually wrote (Jenn 2006: 240). As one might expect, the chapter where schoolmaster Dobbins loses control of his pupils was dropped completely.

While the British exported their literature throughout the world, their own reading tastes remained strikingly insular, even when they could publish foreign texts royalty-free. Franco Moretti investigated 14 English lending library catalogues between 1838 and 1861, and found that the proportion of foreign novels ranged between 0 and 9 per cent. A sampling of national bibliographies revealed that just 5 per cent of novels published in Britain in 1850 were foreign, compared with 20 per cent a century earlier. In 1850, 20 per cent of French novels, close to half of German novels, and about 80 per cent of Russian novels were translated. Drawing on bookshop sales reports published in *The Bookman*, Troy Bassett and Christina Walter have reconstructed a British bestseller list for the final decade of the nineteenth century. The top ten authors were all English or Scottish: in descending order, S. R. Crockett, Marie Corelli, Rudyard Kipling, Ian Maclaren, Stanley Weyman, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Elizabeth Thorneycroft Fowler, J. M. Barrie, and Mrs Humphry Ward. The only foreigner who sold well was Émile Zola, in fourteenth place, although (or perhaps because) his works were successfully prosecuted for obscenity in 1888 and 1889. Far down the list were Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Henryk Sienkiewicz, and James Russell Lowell. Ironically, in the century of the global common reader, the horizons of English readers still ended at Dover.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

VICTORIAN THEATRICALITY



Katherine Newey

In considering the Victorian theatre, we are faced with a paradox. The nineteenth century was one of the most active, innovative, and playful periods in the history of British theatre. Yet the theatre – its practices, its politics, its aesthetics – was everywhere spoken against. Until the knighthood presented to Henry Irving in 1895, which symbolised the final acceptance of the actor into the ranks of ‘gentleman’ (significantly no actress was made a dame until 1918), the theatre was an embattled profession, struggling for recognition. Yet, as late as 1898, Clement Scott – a man of the theatre through and through – could declare: ‘It is really impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession’, encapsulating one significant aspect of Victorian anxieties about the theatre: the role of women within it. As Scott’s intemperate comment suggests, public discussions of the theatre as art, or entertainment, or work, more often focused on its immorality and excess than its achievements. Throughout the period there was a continuing ambivalence about the cultural and moral values of pleasure, entertainment, and enjoyment. But Victorian culture revelled in its theatrical and performative elements, in public ceremony and private entertainments. The theatre as an industry flourished as London’s West End became the theatrical capital of the world (Davis and Emeljanow 2001: 167), and regular international tours established British actors as pioneers of the globalisation of culture. This contradiction is never happily resolved in the period, and scholarship on the Victorian theatre has tended to replicate this anti-theatrical ambivalence.

The link here, the source of the anxiety and criticism – but also the source of vitality and energy – is theatricality. Victorians understood the danger of theatricality, but were continually seduced by its energy and the possibilities it offered. The most recent study of theatricality, by Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait, offers a succinct history of theatricality, and its complement, anti-theatricality, identifying a deep vein of anxiety in Western, Christian Europe about the nature of mimesis in the theatre as a specific form of representation (Davis and Postlewait 2003: 5–6). They note the difficulties that arise from a form of art that focuses our attention on the uncomfortable idea that we perform our social behaviour, and suggests that ‘theatre and life are inseparable’ (Davis and Postlewait 2003:

11). Theatre is, as many theatre theorists have observed in one way or another, innately playful and paradoxical. The body performing in front of you is not-real, but it is also not not-real: it is still a human body, observably moving and speaking, and expressing feeling. And beyond that, in the nineteenth century, the increasing demand for ‘natural’ acting, in which the move from actor to character was made to appear seamless (Davis and Postlewait 2003: 19) meant that the craft, skill, and technique of acting was ignored by audiences and public commentary, resulting in an over-identification of actor with role. This naive understanding of representation should not have survived other, far more sophisticated Victorian theorisations of realism, yet it did, and this cultural ambivalence has left a legacy of silence from most later scholars on the role of the theatre in Victorian culture.

Paradoxically, discussions of theatricality and performativity in Victorian culture have flourished recently, but generally without anchorage in the material culture and practices of the theatre. As Rohan McWilliam observes, in his positing of the ‘melodramatic turn’ in cultural histories of the nineteenth century, this critical move then assumes that melodrama – but I would argue the theatre more broadly – is presented as ‘an inert and unchanging category’ and the terms ‘melodramatic’ – or ‘theatrical’ or ‘performative’ – are in danger of explaining nothing (McWilliam 2000: 72). At one level, of course, ‘theatricality’ *cannot* be separated from the theatre: it is the quality that makes theatre theatrical. Davis and Postlewait, citing Wilmar Sauter, argue for a broader, but nevertheless still genre-grounded definition: ‘theatricality is meant to represent the essential or possible characteristics of theatre as an art form and as a *cultural phenomenon*’ (Davis and Postlewait 2003: 22, my emphasis). Notwithstanding the critical view that the insistence on maintaining the study of theatricality in relation to theatre’s material practices is literal and prosaic (Stern 1998: 446), stretching the connection too far in an account of Victorian culture has had particular historiographical consequences, which I touch on below. The swift move from discussing the material practices and texts of the theatre, to theatricality as a cultural phenomenon, which has been noted in recent work (McWilliam 2000: 72–73) comes in part from a deeply ingrained and often unarticulated disciplinary inheritance of nineteenth-century canonical and hegemonic critical moves.

However, if we open out Sauter’s potentially tautological definition, and focus particularly on the presence of theatre as a cultural phenomenon, ‘theatricality’ is a way of pinpointing what Stephen Greenblatt has called ‘the circulation of social energy’. In the nineteenth century this broader sense of a social theatricality, or a circulation of theatrical energy, is generated in part through stage performance, with its heightened representation of reality through credible and powerful fictions, and in part through the imbrication of performance within an energetic political culture based in the political agitations and exploding visual culture of the early nineteenth century. Significant, too, after the mid century, was the widespread acknowledgement of performance as part of public life, and the anxieties this caused, as identity could no longer be authorised by attachment to place or property. What Karen Halttunen finds in America in the late 1840s and 1850s, where sentimental culture was ‘giving way to a worldly acceptance of self-display, social formalism, and ceremonial ritual as appropriate expressions of middle-class position’ (Halttunen 1982: 153), might also be seen in Britain from the 1830s, tracked in the ‘Silver

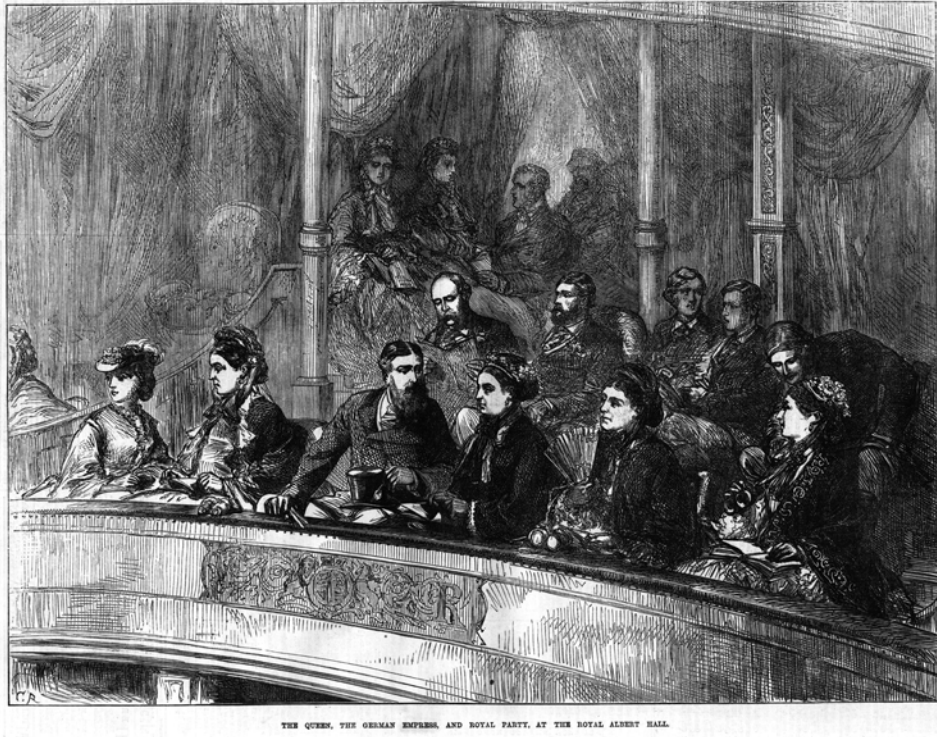


Figure 32.1 ‘The Queen, the German Empress, and Royal Party, at the Royal Albert Hall’, *Illustrated London News*, 18 May 1872: 473

Fork’ novels of Catherine Gore, the fictions of Thackeray, and in the coruscating satire of Dickens’ minor characters such as the Veneerings, or Trollope’s Augustus Melmotte. The sensation of the Tichborne Claimant emphasised the inadequacy of the technologies of identity, and the difficulties of relying on an individual’s claim to authenticity. As Rohan McWilliam points out, in a culture that ‘placed a high premium on the idea of transparency [. . .] his supporters felt that his [Tichborne claimant’s] artless self-presentation was a reason to believe him’ (McWilliam 2007: 190). Yet, as McWilliam emphasises, the Tichborne affair was a Victorian spectacle (2007: 189–90). In both fictions and fact, authenticity was liable to become an object of play, of performance, undermining the very transparency that was so valued. As Halttunen points out, ‘for when sincerity became a matter of style or fashion, sentimental typology was rendered meaningless’ (1982: 189).

In the intersections of political and theatrical culture of the Georgian period, as Marc Baer and Julia Swindells have shown, theatre and politics draw on similar traits. This is a culture where the boundaries between actor (performer or politician) and audience are blurred, where the public performance of certain character traits is emphasised, and where social meanings are constructed through heightened exchange between actors and audiences. Using the Old Price Riots and the reform movement respectively, Baer and Swindells argue for a theatricalised political

culture, and a politicised theatrical culture, at the beginning of the Victorian period. This performative energy, and the heightening of the senses and responses it evoked in spectators, became, for the rest of the century, a cultural style where the ability to perform and engage an audience through voice and physical presence became a necessary feature of many activities and professions, from preaching, to the Law Courts, to the public lecture. Charles Dickens' attachment to performance – both textual and bodily – is a central element of his life and critical reputation. His movement between the realms of theatre, platform performance, fiction, and magazine publishing were of a piece with several less well known of his contemporaries, such as Charles Reade, Douglas Jerrold, Edward Bulwer Lytton, and later, Florence Marryat and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. John Ruskin employed actor-manager Wilson Barrett to direct the visual illustrations and effects for his lectures at the Royal Institution, which became the start of *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Newey and Richards 2010: 14); and Martin Hewitt has identified a long list of striking and theatrical lecturers on science whose presence, he argues, became the exhibit (Hewitt 2012: 91–3). In the law courts, Joseph Meisel argues that barristers' powers of performance could have significant effects on the outcomes of cases, citing Edwin James' training in melodrama as a factor in his ability to appeal to a jury's feelings (Meisel 2001: 199–200). These examples – and many more – serve to underline Nina Auerbach's claim that theatricality was a 'cultural fact' in the nineteenth century (Auerbach 1990: 13).

Yet theatricality, as cultural style and cultural fact, remained debatable territory throughout the nineteenth century. From anxieties about the 'performance' of gender and class in sensation fiction and drama, to the desire for public figures to assert their personal integrity (Auerbach 1990: 3), theatricality was still regarded as a challenge to authenticity. The concept of authenticity, as Lynn Voskuil argues, was 'underdeveloped as a theoretical construct' both then and now (2004: 10), but still central to the self-fashioning of Victorian subjectivity, and our understanding of it now. Yet, as Voskuil points out, theatricality is not the polar opposite of authenticity (2004: 12); indeed, as I will argue in my discussion of acting theory, the stage performance of authenticity – or the cluster of concepts around it, such as truth, integrity, the real – requires a high degree of a certain kind of theatricality, and a sophisticated understanding of theatrical mimesis.

This gap between Victorians' increasing subtlety of thought around the real in fiction and the visual arts, and Victorian theatre theory (in all but a few cases) demonstrates, as Davis and Postlewait argue, the enduring power of the anti-theatrical 'grounded [...] in a social morality of class prejudice and bourgeois paternalism' (Davis and Postlewait 2003: 18). Any study of Victorian theatricality must acknowledge these anxieties about theatre and theatricality, and the effects of this on the historiography of the Victorian theatre. In the early twenty-first century, we have inherited an account of the Victorian theatre that has, as Jacky Bratton puts it, 'distorted our understanding of the development of theatre in Britain' by positing an élitist, text-driven, literary model of the desirable theatre (Bratton 2003: 11). If we do not recognise that the valuation of certain types of theatre came from a strongly ideologically inflected desire, we are vulnerable to replicating the same anti-theatrical historiography begun in the early nineteenth century, and accepting unquestioningly the hierarchy of aesthetic value through

which that desire was achieved. That is, the received narrative of the antitheatrical ‘decline of the drama’ – a story of moral and aesthetic decline, told with an often thinly veiled discomfort with the apparent excesses of feeling and pleasure involved in the Victorian theatre.

The ideologically driven desire for a particular kind of theatre, and theatrical expression – theatricality as both theatrical practice and cultural phenomenon – which dominated Victorian public discourse about the theatre, was laid out five years before the accession of Queen Victoria. A House of Commons Select Committee to enquire into the state of dramatic literature was established in 1832. This Committee brought together agents of radical political reform with the principal figures of the theatre industry of Britain, to examine the concept of ‘the National Drama’ and seek the causes of its apparent decline. The 1832 Select Committee, led by Edward Bulwer Lytton, and reflective of the more general ethos of reform in the years 1829 to 1832, was part of the move of the radical liberal faction to clear away abuses of ‘Old Corruption’ in the wake of the electoral Reform Act of 1832 (Ganzel 1961). Julia Swindells links the performative aspects of the reform movement with the performances staged by witnesses to the Committee, and the theatrical understanding and ‘sympathetic appreciation of theatrical radicalism’ of Committee members themselves (Swindells 2001: 11–12). It was a remarkable conjunction of politics and theatre, and offers a powerful riposte to later claims that the theatre is of negligible interest in a study of Victorian culture.

The Committee confirmed the significance of the theatre as an institution of British national culture, part of the imagined community of ‘England’ formed through discursive practices, a central characteristic of the modern nation-state according to Benedict Anderson (1991). However, the range of evidence offered to the Committee suggests that the significance of the theatre in British national life was more complex than the terms of reference for the Select Committee could encompass, and certainly more vital to national life than is suggested by the Committee’s rather limp conclusions and recommendations. While the Select Committee threw into high relief the legislative and aesthetic issues surrounding the position of the theatre as a national institution, it did little to probe the underlying shifts in the cultural understanding of theatre and theatricality in the Victorian period. The Committee’s proceedings demonstrated a rather paradoxical mixture of the radical and reformist ambition to ‘throw open the stage’ (rather as Mr Wopsle calls for the throwing open of the Church), with a desire to see only a certain kind of drama emerge. This was the drama of and for the newly emergent educated middle class, by men of letters, not men of the theatre (and the gender is deliberate). It was not the popular theatre of melodrama, pantomime, and burletta, the staple of London theatres: the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the minor theatres.

After a wealth of evidence and debate, the Committee’s conclusions were predictable. The Committee observed that there is ‘a considerable decline, both in the Literature of the Stage, and the taste of the Public for Theatrical Performances’ because of ‘the prevailing fashion for late dinner hours, the absence of Royal encouragement, and the supposed indisposition of some Religious Sects to countenance Theatrical Exhibitions’ (Parliamentary Papers 1831–32: 3). The class implications of ‘late dinner hours’ and Royal presence at the theatre are obvious:

the Committee is registering a perceived change in audience composition, but it appears that the growing local audiences mentioned by George Davidge, manager of the Coburg Theatre on the south bank of the Thames (now the Old Vic), and his colleagues, were of little significance to the Committee. The Committee recommended that the Lord Chamberlain should be given the sole right to license theatres as well as license new plays, and that given the difficulty of defining the 'legitimate' drama, all theatres – even the 'more humble orders of Dramatic Talent' – should be free to perform the legitimate drama, as long as they are licensed by the Lord Chamberlain to do so (Parliamentary Papers 1831–32: 4). The guiding laissez-faire philosophy of the Committee's enquiries is encapsulated in its final recommendation, which proposes that 'the Drama will be freed from many present disadvantages' if left to the 'fair experiment of Public support' (Parliamentary Papers 1831–32: 5). Competition and freedom to practise for writers, actors, and managers, is offered as the primary solution to the problem of the 'decline of the drama'. Whatever other disappointments were felt by those involved with the 1832 Select Committee, the power of intellectual property might be said to have been the immediate success of the enquiry: in 1833 a parliamentary bill was passed to regularise the copyrights due to playwrights, and supported by the formation of the Dramatic Authors' Society. A select number of women were invited to become honorary members, but that is another story (Newey 2005).

The Select Committee was set up to investigate what it called a decline in 'the taste of the Public for Theatrical Performances'. This diminution in public taste for performance was not, however, a matter of declining audience numbers, or lack of novelty and innovation in dramatic writing. A decline in these aspects of theatre is demonstrably false, as recent scholarship by theatre historians – such as Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow on audiences, Jane Moody on 'illegitimate' theatre, and Tracy Davis on theatre economics – shows. Evidence presented by managers, actors, and writers to the Select Committee also identified new forms, and new audiences. But these were not the audiences of the literate and educated middle class travelling to Drury Lane or Covent Garden to see the classics of the English National Drama, as envisaged by Bulwer Lytton and his colleagues. As Davis and Emeljanow show, the new audiences were local, diverse, and hungry for novelty. They were also attuned to the politics of the theatre, and politics in the theatre. Politics found its way onto the stage throughout this period, despite the political censorship ushered in by the 1737 Theatres Act, and maintained by successive Examiners of Plays in the Lord Chamberlain's office, and despite the specific evidence given by George Colman, then Examiner of Plays, to the Select Committee about his deliberate censorship of political reference. The chief vehicle for politicised performance was, of course, melodrama. And in the background, even playing while the Select Committee is conferring, we can find many performances in theatres across London of melodramas with titles that invite an expectant audience to witness performances that speak to the experience of the working man or woman: *Reform!*; *Sally in Our Alley*; *Black-Ey'd Susan*; *Luke the Labourer*; *The Factory Lad*; *The Rent Day*; *The Factory Girl*; *Andreas Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol*; *The Climbing Boy*; *The Merchant of London* . . . the list is extensive, and suggests an audience ready to read melodrama as a vital, present voice in channelling popular resistance to power.

It was also an audience committed to seeing as believing. As Dickens points out in *Household Words*:

Joe Whelks [...] is not much of a reader, has no great store of books [...] and no power at all of presenting vividly before his mind's eye what he reads about. But put Joe in the gallery of the Victoria Theatre; show him doors and windows in the scene and that people can get in and out of it; tell him a story with these aids, and by the help of live men and women dressed up, confiding to him their inmost secrets, in voices audible a mile off, and Joe will unravel a story through all its entanglements and sit there as long after midnight as you have anything left to show him.

(Dickens 1850)

Notwithstanding Dickens' condescension to 'Joe Whelks' (which is of a piece with the attitudes of Bulwer Lytton and his colleagues), he identifies a key to Victorian theatricality. Dickens articulates the importance of telling through 'showing' and 'playing'. It is no coincidence that it was melodrama, so well able to adapt to the expression of messages of resistance, and perform the heroism of the ordinary man and woman, which is also the form that is most criticised and excoriated by the literati, that growing body of public critics and men of letters who wished to reform the theatre, and halt its decline.

In matters of regulation and control, what legislators could never completely control was what was at the centre of the theatre: the performing body. If the century has been judged by some critics as wanting in the production of great dramatic writing, it indisputably produced great dramatic performers and performances. As successive attempts at regulation of *performance* demonstrate, the body and the voice on stage eluded attempts at pinning them down within a regulatory framework. Victorian performance was endlessly innovative and resourceful, and it was this performance energy – theatricality – that defied both regulation and critical attempts to talk down the impact and power of the theatre across the century. In Victorian performances we find a rich field of representation of human subjectivity, of what it was to be human. However, notions of human subjectivity explored through performance were not neutral, and were contested on the same ideological and aesthetic battle grounds as were dramatic writing. By the mid-Victorian period, debates around ideas and theories about acting, and their links with debates over human behaviour started to engage with the new sciences of evolution and psychology. However, these links were never made explicit at the time, and are still only briefly touched upon in new work on the history and cultural politics of the passions. Recent scholarship on Charles Darwin's work on emotions is starting to uncover Darwin's debt to the theatre and theatricality: as Jane R. Goodall demonstrates, the process of influence between Darwin and popular culture was two-way (Goodall 2002: 5), and both Jonathan Smith and Tiffany Watt-Smith draw our attention to Darwin's use of actors and extant texts on performance in actors' manuals and theoretical studies of gesture. The influence moved the other way as well: throughout the century, discussions of acting aspired to the status of science, prescribing and justifying expression through observation and documentation, as illustrated by Henry Siddons' *Practical Illustration of*

Rhetorical Gesture and Action (1822), whose discussions of the passions adopt the scientific language of anthropology, particularly in his comparisons between the ‘natural’ expressions of ‘civilised’ Europeans and nationalities who represent the Other.

In 1883, Denis Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* was translated and published in English. This was its first appearance in English, a delay in translation that mirrors its delay in publication in France: Diderot’s text was written in 1773 but not published until 1830. Walter Herries Pollock’s translation, 50 years later, reignited debates over the nature of acting: what acting is and what it should be. Of course, on the subject of acting, there was constant discussion and exchange throughout the nineteenth century by theatre professionals, critics, and philosophers, as Alan S. Downer’s survey of the developments and mutations in acting over the nineteenth century demonstrates. The nineteenth century, argues Downer, was a period of increasing attention to ideas about the ‘naturalness’ of performance (1946: 569). At stake in both public and private encounters between the material practices of the theatre and a theatricalised and performative culture was one of the central questions of Victorian theories of realist representation: the certainty (or uncertainty) of coming to authentic knowledge through rational and realist methods of observation and experience. Victorian investment in knowing through seeing – so central to popular theatre – is increasingly identified as a key part of this epistemology, from the Ruskinian precepts of ‘right seeing’, which drove the Pre-Raphaelites’ attempts at revolutionising pictorial representation, to debates in the 1880s and 1890s over realism (Hewitt 2006: 419). Taking its cue from the Romantics’ re-evaluation of strong feeling as both an aesthetic ideal and a moral imperative, nineteenth-century acting forged an overtly expressive style, using large and fluid bodily gestural vocabulary that sought to mirror the ‘natural’ expression of the passions. By 1883, the debate over ‘natural’ expression was part of a larger field of investigation into subjectivity itself. In the context of Darwin’s theorising of human descent, and his removal of divine intervention in human creation, as well as work by Darwin and others on the science of feelings, what did it mean to be human? And most pressingly, what was natural? How did actors play naturally?

The translation of Diderot’s *Paradoxe* was preceded by George Henry Lewes’ collection of theatrical criticisms written in the 1850s and 1860s, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875), and succeeded by William Archer’s attempt to resolve the debate over the nature of the actor’s sensibility with his broad discussion, *Masks or Faces* (1884). Lewes’ essays strove to lay down the ground rules of definition in the debate, and he makes an important distinction between what is natural and what is real in theatrical representation: ‘Naturalism truly means the reproduction of those details which *characterize the nature of the thing represented*’ (Lewes 1875: 118). However, Lewes’ emphasis on the representation of feeling, rather than performing the feeling itself (the important distinction theorised by Diderot) was the subject of heated debate. Much was made of differing interpretations of Diderot’s comments on the actor’s sensibility. One practitioner wedded to the valuing of the actor’s sensibility over his craft was Henry Irving, whose ‘Preface’ to Pollock’s translation of *Paradoxe* flatly contradicts Diderot’s theories. Irving, quoting Talma, writes that sensibility is

that faculty of exaltation which agitates an actor, takes possession of his senses, shakes even his very soul, and enables him to enter into the most tragic situations, and the most terrible passions, as if they were his own.

(Diderot 1883: xvi)

Constant Coquelin countered Irving's views with a defence of acting as an art with a strong tradition of craft and technique, not merely the expression of the actor's sensibility. Coquelin's interpretation of Diderot is to be found in his explanation of the actor's 'double nature': 'He has his first self, which is the player, and his second self, which is the instrument' (Coquelin 1926: 5) concluding that 'Art is, I repeat, not identification, but representation' (1926: 30). Weighing in on the debate between Irving and Coquelin was Tommaso Salvini, who summarised the Diderot/Irving/Coquelin debate thus, his language revealing his own position on the matter:

This point, if I have rightly understood it, resolves itself mainly into the simple question, Should an actor feel positively and be moved by the emotions he portrays, or should he be entirely negative and keep his own emotion at arm's length, as it were, and merely make his audience believe that he is moved?

(Salvini n.d.)

Also in 1884, William James' essay 'What is an Emotion?' was published in the psychology journal *Mind*. While there is no way of ascertaining a direct causal relationship between James' essay and the flurry of debate around the translation of Diderot, there is a powerful synchronicity; as there is between both texts and Lewes' arguments about 'natural' acting. Diderot's view was that an actor is most successful when he is most technical: George Henry Lewes put it another way: 'The supreme difficulty of an actor is to represent ideal character with such truthfulness that it shall affect us as real [. . .]. His art is one of representation, not of illusion' (Lewes 1875: 112–13). William James' famous passage (much quoted as the foundation of the James–Lange theory of emotions) is remarkably similar in its emphasis on the outward and corporeal sources of emotions and their representation:

Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect [. . .] and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble [. . .]. Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colorless, destitute of emotional warmth. We might then see the bear, and judge it best to run, receive the insult and deem it right to strike, but we should not actually feel afraid or angry.

(James 1983: 170)

Thomas Dixon notes that the revolutionary element of James' theory was 'stated simply that the bodily changes that people had been inclined to call the "expression"

of an emotion were in fact the primary constituent cause of the emotion' (Dixon 2003: 207). What is seen as James' startling insight that 'our mental life is knit up with our corporeal frame' (James 1983: 181) is a common understanding by theatre practitioners in the nineteenth century of the emotional power of performance deriving from physical representation. It was the assumption underlying systems of representation outlined by Henry Siddons' *Practical Illustration of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (1822) and Leman Rede's *A Road to the Stage* (1827). It was a principle central to Constantin Stanislavski's system of acting and remains a widespread (even hegemonic) view of acting to the present.

An insistence on 'natural acting,' as defined by Diderot or Lewes, requires the recognition of the actor's task as chiefly that of *representation*. There is danger here, according to Irving, Salvini, and Archer, that the actor becomes corrupted or false. As William Worthen notes, in Archer's argument acting must guarantee that 'the revelation of actual feeling in performers seems to sustain accomplished acting because it is the sign of deeper engagement with "real experience"' (Worthen 1984: 134). Anchoring the concept of performance in an individual's sensibility and investing the actor with the cultural sanction and powers to exhibit refined and extreme sensibility worked as a defence against the falsifying potential of theatricality. Sensibility in part allayed a cultural anxiety at the base of anti-theatricalism: 'the recognition that the actor, or impostor, practices a perilous art, and tempts other men to do the same. The age-old dread of mutability, the longing for a state of perfection akin to the immobility of God [...] persist, though with diminishing intensity' (Barish 1981: 317). Yet this emphasis on sensibility was also dangerous: it did not necessarily guarantee transparency or authenticity, as it could be a performance in itself (as Halttunen and McWilliam argue). In his comparison of the expression and representation of feelings in theatrical performance with the presentation of self in the modernising city of the nineteenth century, Richard Sennett points out that 'Whatever knowledge an audience has of a performer's private life will not suffice to arouse belief in what he or she does on stage' (Sennett 1986: 39). Increasingly, it is the performance that must speak for itself, as the impact of modernity challenged long-held conventions of theatrical representation.

Victorian debates over realism had limited impact in the theatre; a result, I would argue, of deep-seated anxieties around representation, sensibility, and the expression of emotion. However, by the end of the Victorian period, the mainstream theatre had developed a set of conventions that attempted to resolve the 'problem' of false authenticity by offering literal reality. The 'real pump and two washing-tubs' of Mr Crummles, which Dickens satirised in 1838, became the real Gatling guns used in Augustus Harris' Drury Lane melodramas of imperial derring-do. Steamrolling anxieties about the seductive ability of the 'not-real' of performance to represent truth to its audiences, by the late nineteenth century, mainstream theatre was an important industry, dominated by spectacle. The international success of actor-managers such as Wilson Barrett, Henry Irving, and the Kendals, indicated a thriving commercial theatre industry that underlined the significance of the theatre as a national cultural institution, as well as a dynamic international business. In the West End of London and on tour in the Americas and the British Empire, the stage showed off English culture to the world. Drury Lane, under the management of Augustus Harris from 1879, typified a new style of commercial

management, producing long-running and spectacular (and spectacularly expensive) shows. Harris was renowned for his lavish productions, excellent casting, and well-trained choruses. The Drury Lane Autumn melodrama and Christmas pantomime were reported across the nation each year. In many of these spectacular productions, Drury Lane drew the rest of the world into the theatre as Harris returned again and again to the topos of the British Empire and the role of the English gentleman in the world beyond the shores of Great Britain. Plays such as *The World* (1880), *Youth* (1881), and *Pluck* (1882) promulgated the stereotypes of the valiant and brave Englishman, coming face to face with the duplicity and evil of the foreigner in a foreign land, which is reformed and civilised by the actions of English heroism. The colonised spaces of Africa and India were imagined and constructed on the Drury Lane stage through the multiple languages of English performance – dialogue, stage spectacle, song, and gesture.

Bill Ashcroft calls this process ‘worlding’ – ‘the inscription of the European world upon the [. . . colonised] tabula rasa’ (Ashcroft 1994: 168). As Ashcroft argues, the use of the English language in ‘worlding’ the (apparently) uninscribed territories of the empire created place through language as a ‘palimpsest in which the imperial order of language continues to be written and rewritten’. As these spectacular imperial melodramas of the end of the century emerged from the earlier colonial melodrama (Bratton *et al.* 1991: 133), they moved from imagining the world beyond England as a place of danger to a place of the exercise of power. By the 1870s, melodrama had become part of what John MacKenzie identifies as a ‘key component of the ideological apparatus of the imperialist state’ (MacKenzie 1984: 7). To demonstrate this process, I want to track one colonial/imperial ideologem that endured for 45 years. ‘Cheer, Boys, Cheer’ started as a song published in 1852 by Charles Mackay (lyrics) and Henry Russell (music), which promoted the emigration to and colonisation of the New World (chiefly north America), as a refuge from the poverty and lack of prospects in England:

Cheer! boys! Cheer! no more of idle sorrow,
Courage, true hearts, shall bear us on our way,
Hope points before, and shows the bright tomorrow,
Let us forget the darkness of today.
So farewell England much as we may love thee
We’ll dry the tears that we have shed before
Why should we weep to sail in search of fortune?
So farewell England Farewell for evermore.

Such a song is in marked contrast to the representation only 20 years earlier of ‘foreign parts’ in *The Factory Lad*, the quintessential protest melodrama:

Aye! some foreign outlandish place to be shipped off like convicts to die and starve. Look at Will Rushton, who was enticed, or rather say ensnared there with his wife and four children – Were not the children slaughtered by the natives, who hate white men, and live on human flesh – and was not his wife seized too, your own sister, and born away, and never returned [. . .]?
(Walker n.d.: 10)

Henry Russell held that his and Mackay's song 'impressed on many a poor family the absurdity of clinging to a country, if that country refused them and their children bread. Hundreds, nay, thousands, followed the good advice, and set out to seek their fortunes in the New World' (Russell 1895: 235). He developed an entertainment around the song, and others that he and Mackay had written on the same theme, and toured *The Far West, or the Emigrant's Progress from the Old World to the New*, as a multi-media show, involving songs, music, and a diorama to illustrate 'every step the emigrant takes from leaving the old country to his final settlement in the new' (Russell 1895: 236). Russell himself spent many years working in the United States, and his own stories fed into his second entertainment, *Negro Life in Freedom and in Slavery*, which formed a delightful and 'clever and popular' entertainment, with 'extraordinary [...] unprecedented' success, reviewed in glowing terms throughout the country (*Reynolds's Newspaper* 1852; *Liverpool Mercury* 1852).

Forty years later, in 1891, Augustus Harris created a special evening at Covent Garden to celebrate the life and work of Henry Russell. Russell came out of retirement to appear on the stage once more, and the evening featured, of course, renditions of 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer!'. The *Daily Telegraph* review proposed Russell's songs as 'truly the anthem of optimism. [...] So sang the Guards as they started for the Crimea; and so have sung countless workers bound for foreign shores, dispelling sad memories with that gallant chorus' (Russell 1895: 271). In 1895, 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer!' became the basis for the September melodrama of that season. But in Harris' adaptation of the song into a melodrama, the intent and emphasis of the piece changed markedly. Russell and Mackay's song represented a call to the spirit of adventure and bravery of working-class English families to emigrate to the new world. It was a world of possibilities, imagined from the metropolitan centre, where the old world was one of 'darkness'. Harris' melodrama strikingly reverses this trajectory, constructing an imagined world beyond London, beyond England, which is full of danger, battle, and fraud. This 'worlding' of Africa defines the place through English theatrical conventions, and the space of Africa is defined by the entrance and travels of English characters through it (Ziter 2002: 192). The English characters introduced in Acts I and II in London are transported to Africa in Act III to recover their fortunes, and in the course of their travels they face the Matabele rebellion. Nugent, a missionary priest, reports that the Matabele are out in force, 'mad for mischief', and unwilling to parley; he describes a massacre: 'the young warriors rushed in – some of my people, women and young children, were butchered, stabbed, hacked, again and again at my very feet – their lifeblood spattering my face' (Harris *et al.* n.d.: f. 19). The hero, George Hilyard, answers:

And this is what the folks at home the Little Englanders would let go on for ever! Thank Heaven out here we've men who'll put an end to it. The Matabele shall do none of their devil's work here – at least not while I live to see it. [...] [We will do] What Englishmen have done before, sir – lick four times their own number when they've got to defend the weak and helpless against the cruel and strong.

(Harris *et al.* n.d.: ff. 19–20)

Russell and Mackay's song of what is wrong with England, and of the positive possibilities beyond England, becomes the hook on which to hang a patriotic melodrama of conservative fantasy, suffused, as MacKenzie notes, with 'anti-semitic, anti-Boer, and anti-black sentiment' in which 'empire had become its own melodrama' (MacKenzie 1984: 52 & 49). The spectacles of the play include a Boer trek (III, ii), and a heroic ride by Blanche, the heroine, who prepares to ride across country and through a storm to save herself and the hero, exclaiming:

Madness to save the lives of our countrymen – madness to save Chepstowe at whose hands alone my good name can be righted. Madness to save George, madness to ride to certain death itself for my own honour, and the life of the man I love – Yes, if that's madness, I am mad enough to go – Quick! The mare! Good-bye! If it's for the last good-bye but if it is God's will that our men are to be saved – I'll save them!

(Harris *et al.* n.d.: f. 34)

The act closes with visual and spectacular action, closing with the tableau, 'The Last Stand', where Chepstowe exhorts his men: 'Attention! My Lads! Let's face it like men – let's finish like soldiers the whole world round, whatever the end may be – though now for wine we honour the toast still and we're proud of it – Come, Gentleman – the Queen!' as the Matabele rush in and the English are saved as 'A charge of CAVALRY sweep across the stage' (Harris *et al.* n.d.: 44). The fourth and final act returns the characters to England, where they are reinstated to London society, in a grand ballroom scene that concludes with Lady Hilyard's triumphant speech:

God bless you, my dears! God bless *you*, Archy! Ay and God bless Africa! For if we hadn't gone *there* things would never have come straight. Wasn't I right when I said 'Go'? Isn't it a case of 'Cheer, boys, Cheer!'

(Harris *et al.* n.d.: f. 53)

At which, the orchestra starts up Russell's tune, 'Cheer, boys, cheer!'

The play received rapturous reviews, in keeping with its spectacle (in both its London and African settings) and the visual richness and excess of its staging. According to *Lloyd's Weekly*, the play was '[h]onest and thoroughly British in tone [. . .] mounted with the utmost picturesqueness and splendour [. . .] The vast stage glows with light and perfectly harmonised colour', the *Era* called it a 'gorgeous spectacle', and *The Times* commends the 'stirring' military scenes, although welcoming the 'reduction in the amount of gunpowder consumed' (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 1895: 9; *The Era* 1895: 11; *The Times* 1895: 8). The dissenting voice in this orgy of congratulation and revelling in glamour and consumption was George Bernard Shaw's:

Give me Rosmersholm or The Master Builder, and I am in my depth: their comparatively simple, natural, sympathetic situations do not puzzle me at all; but in Cheer, Boys, Cheer! I not only do not understand, but I feel that I should

go mad if I tried to. I can only note that there has been a great development of the realistic element in the staging of these plays – or rather of this play; for it is always essentially the same play [. . .] Of drama proper there is hardly any. There are serio-comic discussions on law, politics, business, socialism, the effect of pigeon-shooting on the English character, the danger of the Matabele wiping out the English race with quick-firing guns (rather cool, this, in view of recent history), all picked up and dropped in a scrappy way.

(Shaw 1932: 205–6)

Shaw puts his finger directly on salient features of the play: its conventional strategies of dramaturgy and representation, its conspicuous consumption, and its ‘realistic element’, which simultaneously has nothing ‘whatever to do with the play or with the characters of the speakers’ (Shaw 1932: 206). Where other reviews are excited and congratulatory about the play’s luxurious realism, Shaw finds these are the very things that might send him mad. It is Ibsen whose plays are ‘simple, natural, sympathetic’ – a deliberately provocative statement in the culture wars over Ibsenism.

Shaw’s contrariness is instructive here: it completes a circle that takes us back to Bulwer and Duncombe in 1832. Then, the rhetoric of ‘the decline of the drama’ lamented the valuation of sensation over thought, of spectacle over ideas. The values of the legitimate drama – as defined by Jerrold – ‘where the interest of the piece is mental’ was part of an attempt by a ‘newly ascendant hegemonic fraction’ (Bratton 1996: 59), to reclaim the stage from what was seen to be its domination by the tastes of a new popular, working-class, and increasingly female audience. Shaw’s self-image, and his historical reputation, is that of a theatrical moderniser; he is part of a group who try to rescue the English stage from the corruption of the popular. Yet viewed from the vantage point of the mainstream theatre industry, Shaw’s feigned bemusement in the face of *Cheer Boys! Cheer* suggests that two kinds of theatricality are at loggerheads here. On the one hand is the power of the theatre to make believe and the pleasure involved in witnessing the ‘not-real’ that feels ‘real’, while on the other is the enduring suspicion of the ease with which the theatre can purvey pretence (even fraud) and seduce spectators in spite of its intellectual or aesthetic vacuity. What is at stake is who controlled, and how, theatre’s ability to represent the Victorian world back to itself. Theatre was a powerful vehicle for the exercise of cultural power and capital, and its power was always in contestation. Harris’ imperial melodramas offer a telling synecdoche for the industry itself: to know oneself, one needs to face the fearsome Other.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE EMPIRE OF ART



Alison Inglis

The Victorian art world was one of the most vibrant and successful in Britain's history. The evidence to support this sweeping claim can be readily found in a variety of developments, including the rise in the status and number of artists; the burgeoning demand for exhibitions and the expansion of the commercial market; the explosion in 'black and white' illustration and the emergence of a specialist art press (with the accompanying copyright legislation); the appearance of new art forms like photography alongside the revival of earlier media like fresco; and the influence of new discoveries upon all aspects of artistic convention and subject matter. From its materials and production to its display and consumption, the art of the nineteenth century represented a transformation in Britain's earlier artistic traditions.

This chapter will attempt to convey some of the ideas and ambitions that underpinned the display and interpretation of the 'Fine Arts' – primarily painting, sculpture and the graphic arts – throughout the British Empire during the Victorian period. The discussion will focus on three significant art exhibitions held between 1840 and 1890 in three of the great cities of the era: metropolitan London, provincial Manchester and colonial Melbourne. The analysis of each distinct exhibition will extend beyond the city of origin to encompass its influence upon the artistic cultures of the other two Victorian cities. This comparative approach is intended to shed new light on the extent to which Britain's artistic debates were both transnational in content and imperial in impact; and also tease out particular themes or responses that emerge across the parallel experiences of London, Manchester and Melbourne.

THE EXHIBITION OF CARTOONS AT WESTMINSTER HALL, LONDON, 1 JULY–2 SEPTEMBER 1843

In July 1843, the satirical magazine *Punch* devoted a series of illustrations to the issue of the social benefits of the arts. This topic was widely debated following the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, with parliamentary select committees enquiring into the arts and 'their Connexion with Manufactures', (1835–36), as well as the



Figure 33.1 'Cartoon No. 1: Substance and Shadow' (*Punch*, 15 July 1843: 22)

availability of 'the National monuments and Works of Art' for the 'moral and intellectual improvement [of] the People', (1841). The idea of government sponsorship of the arts held increasing appeal for statesmen and intellectuals of all persuasions, as the arts were seen to offer numerous gains, ranging from improvements to the country's manufactures, to 'a sound and effectual aid to popular education' (Blanchard 1839: 503). Importantly, the arts were believed to 'rend[er] a source of elevated emotion accessible to all' (Anon. 1838: 389) regardless of their literacy; and could play a role in the 'cementing of the bonds of union between the richest and poorer orders' during the post-reform era (quoted in Taylor 1999: 40).

Punch's artist, John Leech, took a pessimistic view of this debate, however, in his illustration entitled 'Substance and Shadow: Cartoon No.1' (*Punch*, 15 July 1843: 22). Depicting a motley crowd of London's poor within an art exhibition, Leech emphasised the discrepancy between the bedraggled onlookers and the pictures' affluent subject matter through several deliberate contrasts: an urchin views a painting of a richly dressed child; an older man on crutches gazes at a portrait of the Duke of Cumberland. For anyone missing these cues, the accompanying text was even more explicit, declaring: 'The poor ask for bread, and the philanthropy of the State accords – an exhibition' (Anon. 1843a: 20).

The exhibition in question was the most important art event of that year: the display of the preparatory designs (or 'cartoons') for the fresco decoration in the new Palace of Westminster, which went on show in Westminster Hall in July 1843.

This ambitious venture had emerged from the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament after the devastating fire almost a decade earlier. For many, that disaster's silver lining had been the opportunity it offered for state sponsorship of the arts. Certainly the country's failure to produce anything like the monumental history paintings that adorned the public buildings of Paris, Munich and Rome had come to be viewed as a national disgrace. Britain's free enterprise system was implicated in this situation, as the flourishing commercial art market based in private, not public, patronage tended to favour the lesser categories of 'portraiture, landscape and genre painting', which lacked the patriotic and didactic capacities of 'high art' (Vaughan 2000: 225).

In 1841, a Royal Commission was appointed, under the chairmanship of Prince Albert, to consider the best means of decorating the Houses of Parliament. The most successful examples of monumental art on the Continent were carefully scrutinised, especially the work of the fresco revival in Germany led by the so-called 'Nazarenes'. The broad approach required by fresco was felt to be especially suited to communicating ideas and impressing upon 'the nation at large a general love of art', as the Nazarene artist, Peter Cornelius explained to one of the future Commissioners, adding: '[i]t was not to be expected that the lower classes ... should have any just appreciation of the delicacies of painting in oil; they required large and simple forms, very direct action, and in some cases exaggerated expression' (Wyse, citing Cornelius, quoted in Charlton 1980: 29).



Figure 33.2 Opening of Cartoons Exhibition, *Illustrated London News*
(8 July 1843: 17)

The Fine Arts Commissioners quickly organised a series of competitions to ascertain the suitability of fresco to the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. The first, announced in early 1842, required life-size drawings illustrating a ‘subject from British History, or from the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, or Milton’ (Boase 1954: 324). The proposal was greeted with enthusiasm – the *Art Union* announced ‘a new birth of British art’ (Anon. 1843b: 207) – while a total of 140 entries were submitted to the competition, many from younger artists. The exhibition of huge cartoons opened with great fanfare and the Queen in attendance on 1 July 1843, and the impressive display was recorded by a large engraving in the *Illustrated London News* (8 July 1843: 17).

The choice of subjects and handling of the compositions provoked much comment. One artist, William Bell Scott, noted wryly: ‘It was a surprising scene, new to English art, and in its immense quality and high excellence astonishes everyone . . . instead of our being without historic art, in London it was found to be plentiful and admirable’ (Minto 1892, 1: 169). But it did not pass unnoticed that at least two of the prize-winning artists, Edward Armitage and John Zephaniah Bell, had studied on the Continent; while most of the other prize winners were seen to adopt a more Germanic style, if only an imitation of the ‘terse “shaded outline” manner of the Munich School’ (Vaughan 1979: 206–07).

Any debate concerning the cartoons’ debt to foreign influences, however, must be placed alongside the broader nineteenth-century tendency to appreciate history in patriotic and racial terms. Past events were perceived as forming part of a nation’s distinctive evolution and therefore were directly connected to the present day. As various scholars have argued, this heightened ‘awareness of temporality’ (see Billie Melman’s essay in this volume), of the past’s complex relationship with the present, meant that distant eras were increasingly depicted in art with all the ‘novelty and vividness’ of modernity (Prettejohn 2001: 87). Hence the German influence was partly explained by the subject matter, for the majority of competitors chose to illustrate events from the heroic Anglo-Saxon era, when the institutions of the modern British state were thought to emerge. This national identification with the Anglo-Saxon race reinforced the relevance of modern German art as a model for British painters, as both countries were seen to share the same ancient cultural roots.

Unlike *Punch*, most commentators judged the exhibition to be a resounding success, not least because of the evidence it gave of the popular appeal of history painting. As Sir Charles Eastlake, the Commission’s secretary, noted with satisfaction:

The daily throng is immense; the public takes great interest, and the strongest proof is thus given to the love of the lower orders for pictures . . . and it is a very gratifying sight to witness the attention and earnestness with which they follow the subjects with books in their hands . . . the first introduction of many to an acquaintance with our best poets and writers.

(quoted in Robertson 1978: 65)

The exhibition’s unprecedented attendance figures were also the direct consequence of the Commissioners’ decision to charge admission during the first fortnight only,

after which, except on Saturdays, admission was free. Many accounts focused on this radical decision and the makeup of the huge crowds, with *The Times* relieved to find ‘most respectably dressed people’, while a poem, ‘Westminster hall on a free admission day’, appeared in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* the following year (Boase 1954: 326).

The circulation of numerous catalogues, articles and specialist texts on the 1843 exhibition as well as lithographs after the prize-winning works ensured that its fame spread across the nation. The cartoons themselves were even sent on a tour of the provinces. The first exhibition’s success encouraged the Fine Arts Commissioners to organise a further series of competitions (involving frescoes, then sculpture and decorative arts), which took place in 1844, 1845 and 1847. The *Athenaeum* proudly identified a ‘prevailing national mania’ for fresco (quoted in Winter 2004: 316).

Manchester was one provincial town that followed the progress of the exhibition with keen interest, chiefly because one of the prize winners, John Zephaniah Bell, was the master of the local School of Design. Bell’s success reflected glory on Manchester’s civic efforts to encourage the fine arts (even though the artist himself departed for London to pursue fame and fortune). Of course, the example set by Westminster was always intended to ‘incite the municipal bodies in the provinces . . . to apply the arts to the decoration of their town halls and other public buildings’ (quoted in Willsdon 2000: 169). This aim was achieved in Manchester when spaces were set aside for murals in the new Town Hall in 1865. Ford Madox Brown, the artist selected to illustrate the rise and progress of Manchester, had in fact submitted cartoons to the 1840s Westminster exhibitions. And although some argue that Brown’s ‘anti-heroic’ and localised imagery represented ‘a new form of civic, as opposed to Westminster-inspired’ mural painting (Willsdon 2000: 180), the echoes of Westminster still reverberate in the Manchester Town Hall’s celebration of the ties between ancient and recent history, especially its inclusion of Anglo-Saxon, medieval and civil war subjects.

If a provincial response to the Westminster exhibition can be identified in a town like Manchester, what was the reaction to this national project at a distant outpost of the empire like Melbourne? Established in 1839, only two years before the Fine Arts Commission was appointed, colonial Melbourne might be expected to have little knowledge of artistic events in London. However, the comprehensive coverage of all things British in the colonial press guaranteed that its Melbourne readership was kept well informed. Thus only five months after the 1843 Exhibition’s July opening, the Australian public could read a detailed account of the ‘Cartoons in Westminster Hall’, describing the display, the works of art and the crowds (Anon. 1843c: 3).

Colonial society’s familiarity with the art world of metropolitan London is vividly demonstrated by the discussion surrounding the embellishment of Melbourne’s new Parliament House. When construction commenced on this impressive public building in 1856, the local merchant, Patrick Just, published a pamphlet championing the use of fresco painting and sculpture in its decoration. The text reveals the author’s firm grasp of the major artistic debates of the preceding decades, including art’s role in forming a nation’s character. Just praised ‘Continental nations’ like Germany and France for their public patronage of the arts, while lamenting Britain’s poor

record in comparison. Recent initiatives, however, like ‘the first Exhibition of Cartoons (designs) at Westminster’ (Just 1856: 9) were applauded as the best means of improving the working man’s ‘knowledge of design and appreciation of the beautiful and true in art’ (Just 1856: 14). Just observed that similar educational opportunities were now offered to Melbourne, and emphasised art’s ability to unify a colonial society:

Nothing will tend to confer more honor on the colony of Victoria than a liberal and judicious patronage of the Fine Arts, and nothing will contribute more to ‘fix’ the colonists, and make them have less wish to return to their native country. Emblazon the walls of public buildings with historical pictures . . . and the various races and nations composing the inhabitants of the colony will rally round it, and form a permanent home.

(Just 1856: 19)

While acknowledging Victoria’s ‘mixed community . . . of European races’, Just reassured his readers that ‘art is a great teacher . . . her language is understood by all’, and proposed that the Parliament’s frescoes should illustrate ‘the History of all Nations, and not [be] confined to the British alone’ (Just 1856: 15, 11). A different view was offered on this subject by the colony’s newest magazine, *Melbourne Punch*, which emulated Leech’s famous ‘cartoons’ by publishing a series of satirical ‘frescoes’ of its own. With subjects drawn from Victoria’s 20-year history but mimicking the Palace of Westminster’s compositions, it re-envisioned the colony’s growth in terms of Britain’s national past. Thus, an illustration titled ‘Frescoes for the New Houses of Parliament No. VI: La Trobe and the Chieftains resist the landing of the convicts’ (Anon. 1856a: 116) depicted the colony’s first lieutenant governor in the guise of Boadicea repelling the Romans.

But despite the public pressure applied by the likes of Patrick Just and Mr Punch, Victoria’s successive governments declined to introduce fresco decoration into Melbourne’s Parliament House interior; possibly because of the perceived failure of the fresco medium at Westminster during the 1850s. Moreover, the whole question of state sponsorship of the arts was now being reassessed. As Emma Winter has argued: ‘in the years following 1848, Britain . . . turned away from the Continent. The state retreated from direct intervention in the artistic realm, and its role was replaced by voluntary initiatives, such as the Manchester art treasures exhibition of 1857’ (2004: 327).

THE EXHIBITION OF THE ART TREASURES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, MANCHESTER, 5 MAY–17 OCTOBER, 1857

With 16,000 works of fine art on display for almost half of 1857, the vast ambition of Manchester’s Art Treasures exhibition represented a defining moment in nineteenth-century visual culture. The art exhibition was (and remains) ‘the greatest ever seen’ (Haskell 1980: 158). The exhibition was divided into sections, including ancient and modern masters; British portraits; watercolours; drawings; engravings;

photography; sculpture; armour; an Oriental court; an ornamental art museum and galleries for famous collections like the Soulages and Hertford. The purpose-built exhibition building covered nearly three acres on the outskirts of Manchester, where a railway station was also constructed to accommodate the crowds.

The proposal that Manchester might host a nationally significant event dedicated entirely to art was first raised in early 1856, in the wake of the successful Paris International Exhibition that had asserted France's cultural ascendancy by including a large fine art section – a category absent from Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851. A Committee of prominent Manchester citizens was formed and quickly secured Royal patronage. Prince Albert, indeed, welcomed the 'distinctive character' of the proposed 'art treasures' theme, but advised the organisers that:

If the [exhibition] . . . were made to illustrate the history of Art in a chronological and systematic arrangement, it would speak powerfully to the public mind, and enable, in a practical way, the most uneducated eye to gather the lessons . . . and would present to the world a gallery such as no other country could produce . . .

(quoted in Finke 1985: 110)

The spirit of the earlier Fine Arts Commission is evident in Albert's words, but now, instead of the artistic medium (fresco) conveying the educational message, the wider populace would benefit from exposure to great art through the comprehensiveness of the display and the scientific approach to its arrangement. Old Master pictures showing the history of art had replaced monumental history painting as the focus of public discussion, but the impetus of national rivalry and the influence of Continental models remained the same. But while Paris' 1855 Exhibition may have sparked the idea, it was the new German art historical scholarship that underpinned the Manchester Exhibition's innovative presentation and interpretation.

The scholar who convinced Prince Albert (and various Select Committees) of the value of art history was Dr Gustav Waagen, the founding director of the Royal National Gallery in Berlin, who had pioneered more coherent gallery displays. Waagen could indeed be considered the 'godfather' of the Manchester exhibition, for his 1854 publication, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* had popularised the belief that Britain's art collections surpassed those on the Continent, and thus inspired the Manchester industrialists to bring the best of these works together. Waagen advised the exhibition's organisers on suitable examples to borrow, and his view that 'Old Masters' could encompass Italian and Northern 'primitives' (namely, medieval and early Renaissance paintings), was ably implemented by George Scharf, the connoisseur appointed to arrange this section of the exhibition.

The result was an unmatched presentation of art history that made full use of the enormous exhibition hall to set out a chronological survey of the art of different nations. More radically still, the works were arranged to demonstrate 'the contemporaneous existence of opposite schools' (quoted in Haskell 2000: 86). Thus the Italian school ran along one side of the south aisle, while on the other appeared works by northern (Netherlandish, German and French) artists of the same period.

To propose that the Italian school could be compared with those of other nations on an equal basis was unprecedented. As Haskell has emphasised: ‘the whole comparative approach invited speculation as to causes: national character, local traditions, religious faith and race became matters of concern’ (2000: 87). Art was no longer about individual artists or the grand tradition; it had become, in Waagen’s words, ‘one of the most important branches of human civilization’ (quoted in Haskell 1980: 154).

Not surprisingly, the exhibition’s spectacular assemblage of masterpieces and new educative display techniques attracted enormous attention. More than 1.3 million people visited the exhibition, while many foreign governments sent special commissioners to report on the event. The French critic, Theophile Thoré, judged the Manchester display an ‘excellent innovation’ with ‘[t]he collection . . . about on a level with the Louvre’ (quoted in Haskell 1980: 158). British art was shown in depth, starting with Tudor and eighteenth-century portraits and ending in a large survey of nearly 700 contemporary paintings (ranging from Royal Academicians to the Pre-Raphaelites). One reviewer, A. H. Layard, was ‘struck by the almost entire absence of pictures aiming at the highest object of art’ (quoted in Robertson 1978: 390); but unlike the 1840s commentators, this dearth of high art was not thought to diminish the educational potential of the exhibition. Elevated subject matter was no longer seen as essential to impart uplifting values; any common but wholesome scene might be sufficient. As another writer exclaimed: ‘may subjects [not] strictly religious exert a moral influence[?] . . . Is there not a lesson in a child praying . . . in the golden sunset, in the cottager’s home?’ (quoted in Macleod 1996: 104). It was not a heart-warming domestic image, however, but the sensational suicide picture – *The Death of Chatterton*, 1856, by the Pre-Raphaelite follower Henry Wallis – that attracted the largest crowds.

To maximise the exhibition’s visitors, a number of strategies were implemented. Entertainment amenities such as an orchestra pit, large pipe organ and refreshment rooms were advertised, while groups from across Britain took advantage of the exhibition’s railway station. Factory owners financed excursions for workers and their families: Titus Salt of Saltaire hiring three trains to transport 2,500 workers (and a brass band) to the exhibition. Different levels of admission were available, such as a reduced charge on Saturday afternoons aimed to encourage the labouring classes. One Saturday visitor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, observed that the exhibition ‘was thronged with a class of people who do not usually come in such numbers’, adding: ‘it was both pleasant and touching to see how earnestly some of them sought to get instruction from what they beheld’ (quoted in Leahy 2008: 80).

Numerous guides and handbooks were also published to explain the display to different readerships (including an *Operative’s Guide* and humorous texts in local dialect). *The Athenaeum* praised the innovative use of photography to illustrate the official *Gems of the Art-Treasures Exhibition* (Anon. 1857a: 1270–71); but other commentators were critical of the lack of interpretative labels in the venue, and Scharf himself wished a lecture theatre had been provided.

This concern for the adequate provision of instructional aids, especially to the uneducated, reveals an inherent tension at the heart of the exhibition project. The systematic arrangement of the display was claimed to speak directly to the

ignorant eye – one of the exhibition’s mottos was ‘[t]o wake the soul by tender strokes of art’ – but the new art historical scholarship had introduced a vast number of unfamiliar ‘Ancient Masters’ that were difficult to decipher. William Gladstone, for instance, found the display ‘a wonderful sight materially, & . . . morally, but bewildering to the mind & exhausting to the eye’ (quoted in Leahy 2008: 76).

Such criticisms did not mute the self-congratulation that surrounded the Art Treasures Exhibition. Manchester had reinvented itself as a city of cultural as well as industrial renown; and most local commentators celebrated the event’s contribution to the ‘education of not only the working man around us, but of multitudes from distant parts of the country . . . Manchester will have conferred a lasting benefit to the Kingdom’ (quoted in Leahy 2008: 74). Even London commentators reluctantly confirmed this claim, while the art establishment acknowledged that the exhibition’s new scholarly emphasis – its creation of a synthetic history of art through chronology and comparison – represented ‘a paradigm’ for future museums (Waterfield 1991: 132). As the *Art Journal* stated: ‘let the present unparalleled display at Manchester suggest some notion of the matchless wealth which under such conditions might one day make up . . . the national collection’ (Anon. 1857c: 237). In fact, Manchester’s exhibition techniques were seen in London very quickly, for George Scharf, the newly appointed director of the National Portrait Gallery, instituted a chronological hang for its opening in 1858.

From a pragmatic perspective, the massive attendance and return of a modest profit (£304 14s 4d) reassured the wider world that art could pay for itself and also offer benefits both tangible and intangible, such as self-improvement and social harmony. The latter belief motivated the subsequent loan of eighteenth-century art from Sir Richard Wallace’s collection (previously the Hertford collection shown at Manchester) to the Bethnal Green Museum in London’s East End in 1872. Undoubtedly Manchester’s success was the inspiration behind the holding of ‘Art Treasures’ exhibitions in Britain and abroad during the next few decades.

One city that emulated this example was Melbourne, which staged a major loan exhibition in 1869. It was not the first in Australia to do so – Hobart had organised an ‘Art-Treasures’ exhibition only the year after Manchester – but Melbourne’s was the nearest colonial equivalent to the 1857 exhibition in terms of scale and conception. Indeed, when Manchester’s exhibition was first mentioned in the colonial press, much was made of the parallels between these two ‘commercial’ cities:

An exhibition of art treasures is to be held . . . in the city of Manchester . . . [guaranteed by] the most eminent merchants and manufacturers of “Cottonopolis”. . . . In a purely commercial city like our own [i.e. Melbourne] art necessarily relies for protection and support upon those [same] classes.

(Anon. 1856b: 18)

A decade later, Melbourne’s leading citizens sought to reaffirm this comparison by employing the ‘improving . . . and elevating influences’ of art to increase the colony’s ‘social refinement and material prosperity’ (Trustees of the Public Library 1869: iv).

The Melbourne 1869 exhibition brought to light art treasures in local private and public collections that established the colony's cultural reputation. The size of the event was unprecedented for an Australian art exhibition, with 2,640 objects organised across categories similar to those at Manchester, as well as some 'miscellaneous' items like a 'stone from the well at Cawnpore' (Trustees of the Public Library 1869: 52). The exhibition venue was the Melbourne Public Library, and the organising committee was also a public body: the government-appointed Fine Arts Commission overseeing the establishment of the colony's National Gallery. In fact, this institution (formerly the Museum of Art) became the major lender of art objects to all sections of the exhibition. Like Manchester, a systematic approach was applied to the display, with 'ancient schools of painting' on one side of the exhibition hall and 'modern' on the other. One reviewer regretted the absence of 'Pre-Raphaelite art' (meaning the art before Raphael), which was 'evidently little in favour with colonial collectors', but argued that the 'grace and beauty' of the assembled Old Masters put 'the comparatively meagre array of modern paintings . . . to shame' (Anon. 1869a: 5).

It should be recognised that the vast majority of Old Masters and even some of the modern examples on display were copies, not originals. But their inclusion as art treasures should not be dismissed as an unfortunate consequence of colonial taste. Instead it reflected contemporary European collecting practices. Fine copies of Old Master works had long been valued by aristocratic connoisseurs; in fact Waagen praised the copies of 'celebrated works' in Northumberland House as 'proof that the English nobility possess not only money but knowledge and taste' (quoted in Inglis 1992: 32). For colonial collectors, Old Master copies symbolised their desire to establish the values of civilized society in their new home.

Furthermore, as technological advances like chromolithography and photography produced ever more accurate replicas, copies began to be valued by museum officials as a means of achieving more comprehensive collections, formed along art historical lines. The South Kensington Museum, for example, advocated a policy of acquiring originals 'as far as possible, but where this [is] impracticable, the system . . . of representing the finest known examples by electrotypes, casts and drawings will be followed' (quoted in Inglis 1992: 34). A selection of South Kensington reproductions were some of the first purchases made by the Melbourne Trustees; and when lent to the 1869 exhibition, presented an unusually thorough survey of the history of ornamental and decorative art in chronological sequence from antiquity to Louis XIV.

Alongside art historical display principles, Melbourne's exhibition echoed Manchester in the priority given to public access. The venue was open every day from 10 am until 4.30 pm and 7 pm until 10 pm, except Sunday, and the entry fee of 1 shilling was lowered to sixpence for children and adults attending after work on Saturday night. The resulting attendance broke all records – forcing the organisers to extend the exhibition by a month – and as Bonyhady reveals: 'over 5000 people bought season tickets, while almost 55,000 paid for admission at the door, yielding a profit of over £2500' (2005: 3). The sense of achievement inspired by the exhibition was clearly reflected in the lavish catalogue and the series of commemorative photographs proudly commissioned by the Public Library Trustees in 1869.

THE GROSVENOR GALLERY INTERCOLONIAL
EXHIBITION, MELBOURNE, 27 OCTOBER
1887–7 JANUARY 1888

During the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, several of the Australian colonies' agents-general in London were inspired to organise a further example of imperial engagement and cultural exchange. Sir Coutts Lindsay, the owner of London's famous Grosvenor Gallery, was invited to tour a series of significant exhibitions of modern British art to Australia. The result was the Grosvenor Gallery's first (and only) intercolonial exhibition, comprising 158 paintings contributed by over 100 contemporary artists, which was held in Melbourne in 1887. Such was the exhibition's impact that the local historian, Alexander Sutherland, ranked it second only to Melbourne's great International Exhibition of 1880, owing to its 'powerful influence in the education not only of the public taste, but also of the aims and ideals of our future artists' (quoted in Inglis 2008: 16.10)

Certainly by the late 1880s, the Grosvenor Gallery had achieved an international reputation as one of the most progressive exhibition spaces in Victorian London. Established as an alternative commercial venue to the conservative Royal Academy, the Grosvenor Gallery's notoriety stemmed from its first exhibition in 1877. Initial interest excited by the combination of avant-garde artists, fashionable society and a lavishly appointed venue escalated to a media frenzy following the libel action taken by one of the exhibition's artists, James McNeill Whistler, against the critic John Ruskin, after the latter famously described Whistler's painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, c.1875, as a 'pot of paint flung in the public's face'. The Whistler–Ruskin trial was a watershed in the Victorian debate regarding the meaning and purpose of art. Ruskin condemned Whistler's expressive surfaces and suggestive title as an affront to the primacy of narrative and technical finish, key precepts of the English School. Whistler, who had trained in France, upheld the artist's right to freedom of expression, which in his case meant the supremacy of formal and associative values (*l'art pour l'art*) over concerns of subject matter or morality.

During the ensuing decade, the Grosvenor Gallery became synonymous in the public mind with the Aesthetic Movement and its religion of beauty; an association fuelled by George du Maurier's satirical cartoons in *Punch* and theatrical parodies like Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience*, which featured a 'greenery-gallery Grosvenor Gallery foot-in-the-grave young man'. *Patience* was performed in Melbourne in 1882, but colonial audiences would already have known of the gallery's activities through reviews in British and colonial journals.

In some respects, the Grosvenor Exhibition in Melbourne represented a celebration of the ten-year history of this cultural icon. Many of the gallery's most famous artists were present: G. F. Watts by three 'Hall of Fame' portraits and two of his great symbolist canvases (*Love and Life*, c.1885 and *Love and Death*, c.1887, a version of which was shown in the 1877 exhibition); and Burne-Jones by a single major painting, *The Depths of the Sea*, 1886, whose full-length male nude maintained the Grosvenor's reputation for controversy as well as its long association with Pre-Raphaelitism. This connection was also underscored by paintings from several of the movement's later followers: Walter Crane, Marie Spartali, Evelyn de

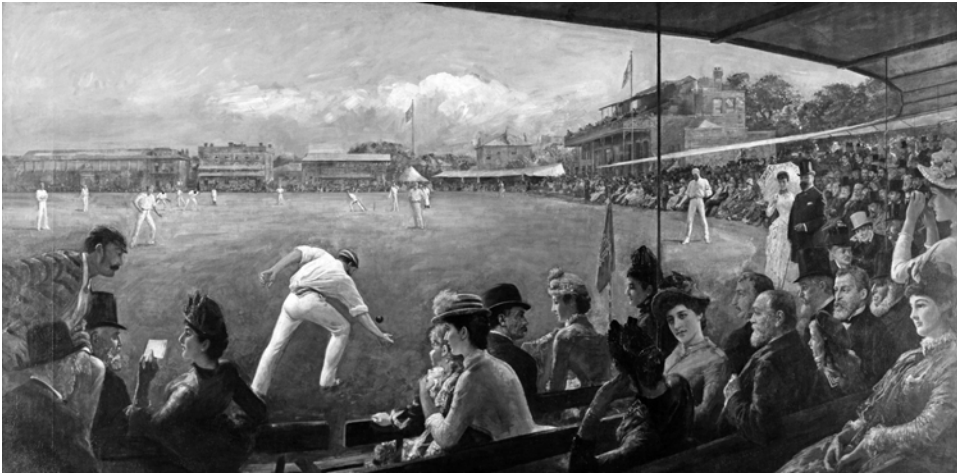


Figure 33.3 Imaginary Cricket Match: *England v. Australia*, 1887 (oil on canvas), Sir Robert Ponsonby Staples and George Hamilton Barrable/© Marylebone Cricket Club, London, UK/The Bridgeman Art Library

Morgan and John Strudwick, whose ‘poetic’ canvases fulfilled the colonial public’s expectations of what Grosvenor Gallery pictures should look like. Local critics quickly adopted the language of aestheticism when assessing these pictures, using terms like ‘dramatic intensity’ or focusing on the artists’ use of archaic ‘Pre-Raphaelite methods’ like tempera (Anon. 1887a: 9).

Other contemporary trends in British art – especially those that reflected Continental influences – were well represented in Melbourne, with the ‘idyllic’ landscapes of Giovanni Costa hanging alongside the more expressive plein-air works of the Newlyn School and New English Art Club, including examples by H. H. La Thangue and Henry Scott Tuke. More mainstream genre and landscape paintings were also included, evidently with an eye to the supposedly conservative colonial market (such as R. P. Staples and G. H. Barrable’s picture of a cricket match entitled *England versus Australia*). In all, a remarkable survey of contemporary British art was assembled, which clearly justified the exhibition catalogue’s concluding statement: ‘it is earnestly hoped that Australian art and artists may receive as large a stimulus as resulted in the inauguration of the first Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition to British art and artists at home’ (Grosvenor Gallery 1887: 11).

The overwhelming majority of colonial reviews were extremely positive about the selection and quality of the pictures on display. But like its London namesake, a large part of the popular appeal of the exhibition was its air of aristocratic exclusivity – reinforced by the presence of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, who ‘escorted’ the works on tour. As ‘Our Lady Correspondent’ observed:

It is ‘the thing’ at present in Melbourne, to take, or pretend to take an interest in art ... the *vox populi* is emphatically in favour of ... Herbert Schmalz[tz]’s] ... ‘Too Late’ ... a picture that tells a story so plainly as to leave very little to

the imagination, and this, I fancy, is partly the reason for its popularity. . . . Our artists linger round the two grand examples of the art by G.F. Watts . . .

(1887: 3)

The writer also noted acerbically that the typically ignorant viewer (dubbed ‘Young Australia’) did ‘not like Burne-Jones, and G.F. Watts is beyond him. But he is much interested in a daub . . . called “England v. Australia”’ (‘Our Lady Correspondent’ 1887: 3).

This account shows the fundamental shift that occurred in the understanding of the role of art in society between 1857 and 1887. The mid-Victorian consensus that a successful work of art was one that communicated most effectively to the widest possible audience had been replaced by the belief that the highest forms of art should be valued for their formal beauty and expressive power, qualities most readily perceived by an elite of artists, connoisseurs and critics. Pictures that focused primarily on storytelling offered greater accessibility to the unsophisticated viewer, but were increasingly found wanting in aesthetic distinction and value.

This shift in attitude was not confined to the colonial periphery. The same situation can be identified in Manchester earlier that year in 1887, at the much larger Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester. Like the Grosvenor Gallery in Melbourne, the fine arts section of the Jubilee exhibition also drew upon the commercial art world, with William Agnew from the Manchester-based firm of art dealers appointed to chair the organising committee. Again, like Melbourne, the art exhibition was contemporary in focus, although far wider in scope, as it aimed for a summary of British art produced during the Queen’s reign.

A relatively large number of poetic, non-academic paintings were exhibited at Manchester. Burne-Jones, Rossetti and Watts were among those given single-artist surveys – with the massive total of 35 works by Watts making his display one of the exhibition’s centerpieces (and as at Melbourne, Watts’ *Love and Life*, *Love and Death* and portraits from the ‘Hall of Fame’ series were on show). This tribute to Watts demonstrated the growing appreciation for ‘ideal’ and symbolist painting in the provinces as well as London. In fact, Watts himself acknowledged: ‘From Manchester and commerce I had received encouragement to carry out those abstract views which . . . I had failed to receive from those [with] inherited position’ (quoted in Macleod 1996: 301).

Most reviewers of the Jubilee exhibition could appreciate Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic works for the ‘power of their vision’, and admit that ‘pictorial qualities were more important than mere representation’; but for the wider audience these artists were often ‘too difficult’. As one writer to the *Manchester Guardian* asked: ‘Why, then do these artists persist in hiding, and disguising their thought, producing not pictures but enigmas, which, to the uninitiated like myself are generally ridiculous?’ (quoted in Treuherz 1987: 218).

Another indication of this growing perception of the different levels of art (‘high brow’ and popular) and their distinct audiences can be found in the ticketing arrangements of Melbourne’s Grosvenor Gallery Intercolonial exhibition. Unlike Westminster in 1843 and Manchester in 1857, where a deliberate effort was made to increase working-class attendance through discounted or free admission, the Intercolonial Exhibition had a general admission of one shilling, except on

Wednesday when a two shillings and sixpence charge ensured a more exclusive audience. There were no discounts for the evening viewings (7 pm to 10 pm) made possible by the National Gallery venue's recently installed electric lighting. Significantly, when the exhibition organisers approached the Victorian government to secure this prestigious public display space, the only proviso was that local artists be granted 'free entry' (Anon. 1887d: 7).

Surprisingly, the colonial government's strong support for what was in effect a commercial venture, raised little complaint, except from local artists who naturally felt 'jealousy at what was held . . . to be an unfair favouring of English artists at the expense of native art' (quoted in Inglis 2008: 16.4). This official endorsement needs to be placed within a broader context. As Jordan (2005) and others have shown, the mid-1880s economic boom in the colony of Victoria encouraged many British dealers and artist societies to try to capitalise on Marvellous Melbourne's business opportunities. But as more imported works of art went on display, the more critical the Victorian public became of their own artists' efforts. In fact, Downer and Phipps claims that: 'prior to the 1880 [Melbourne International] exhibition, critics made excuses for the limited scope of colonial painters . . . After 1880 . . . critics reacted harshly . . . castigating [the local artists' society] for its failure to stimulate the progress of art' (1985: 46). This consciousness of colonial provincialism was also recognised in vice-regal circles, with Lady Loch, the wife of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, noting that local officials were 'very anxious to have an Annual Exhib: of Pictures [from England] . . . if artists wd send'. She clearly viewed the Grosvenor Exhibition as a possible remedy, and was satisfied that the opening 'was quite as full . . . as a private view in London' (quoted in Inglis 2008: 16.5, 16.9).

Ultimately, the Grosvenor Exhibition's success proved difficult to evaluate. Attendance was very high – a total of 33,000 paying visitors in ten weeks – but while admission fees covered expenses, only 28 of the 158 paintings were sold, for a total under £5,000. These purchasers, however, included the colony's national and regional galleries, thereby ensuring that examples of modern British art would exert a long-term influence on Victoria's artists and collectors. The exhibition also had the more intangible benefit of bringing contemporary art into fashion – and providing an example of modern display and marketing techniques that were swiftly adopted by the rising generation of local artists, in events like the '9 x 5 Impression Exhibition' of 1889 with its artistic hang and aesthetic furnishings.

From the perspective of the London art world, the Grosvenor Intercolonial Exhibition confirmed the rich potential of the colonial art market and its receptiveness to British art. This view, moreover, corresponded directly to wider political concerns then prevalent. In the face of rising foreign imperialism, there was a new sense of urgency to strengthen the cultural ties within the empire. It is no coincidence that official interest in touring British art to the colonies commenced in the mid 1880s – a critical moment when 'the development of the Empire in the arts of civilization' was being celebrated by the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 and the first Colonial Conference in 1887 (quoted in Bremner 2003: 52). The Grosvenor Gallery Intercolonial Exhibition was conceived and implemented against this background and was especially valued as a cultural means of promoting 'Imperial unity'. As the exhibition representative, the Earl of Buckinghamshire,

assured his Melbourne audience: ‘The Grosvenor Gallery collection has been sent out with the idea of adding an additional link to that scheme of Imperial federation. . . . There was no doubt that art had a most sympathetic influence in binding people together’ (Anon. 1887b: 9). Thus, at this time when the early Victorian belief in the social accessibility of High Art was beginning to wane, a new faith in art emerged as a mechanism by which British racial and cultural bonds could be reaffirmed across the empire.

CONCLUSION

Asa Briggs famously described London, Manchester and Melbourne as the ‘World City’, the ‘Symbol of a New Age’ and the ‘Victorian Community Overseas’. This chapter has considered the cultural interaction that took place between these great centres of empire through the lens of the Victorian art exhibition. The apparent gulf often believed to exist between London and the provinces or London and the colonies was instead revealed to be an active and elaborate network, built upon a variety of information conduits ranging from newspapers and illustrated periodicals to personal communication and works of art, so that ‘[n]owhere was in complete artistic isolation’ (Fawcett 1974: 214). This point was certainly underscored by the fact that in the Jubilee year of 1887, audiences in London, Manchester and Melbourne were able to view art exhibitions that included works by G. F. Watts, Edward Burne-Jones and H. H. La Thangue, and in at least two cases (Watts’ *Love and Death* and La Thangue’s *The Runaway*) the same picture or a replica was displayed in two of these cities.

Indeed, the three art exhibitions that formed the basis of this study were shown to share a remarkable degree of similarity in their staunch belief in the importance of art’s role within society, and the increasing potential of display strategies and interpretation to facilitate a range of outcomes; from self-improvement and social harmony in the first half of the century to individual transformation and imperial unity in the second. Furthermore, the exhibitions also revealed the extent to which the Victorians’ understanding of art and its uses was formed through transnational as much as imperial interaction – whether it be the inspiration of the monumental mural programmes of France and Germany for the early Victorians, the emerging German art historical scholarship mid century or the lure of *l’art pour l’art* from the 1860s onwards.

Certain themes can likewise be seen to resonate across these exhibitions, such as the importance of art in developing and communicating Britain’s (and its colonies’) sense of history, character and national identity. The Westminster exhibition’s monumental history paintings, for example, represented a pageant of pictorial patriotism that would influence all subsequent efforts in public mural programmes, including those proposed for Manchester and Melbourne. But while the Westminster and Grosvenor Gallery Intercolonial Exhibitions demonstrated the willingness of Manchester and Melbourne to replicate the metropolitan culture in certain circumstances, the assumption that the provinces and colonies were to all intents and purposes mere ‘copy societies’ was also challenged by this study. As the example of Manchester’s 1857 exhibition made clear, this confident city had no hesitation in taking the initiative away from London when possible, and its Art

Treasures extravaganza surpassed all previous art historical exhibitions and established the benchmark for future displays.

Not surprisingly, provincial Manchester offered an appealing role model for colonial Melbourne, whose own Art Treasures exhibition embraced innovations in exhibition display and interpretation to emphasise its cultural credentials. Melbourne's inclusion of copies alongside originals likewise demonstrated the colony's willingness to take up new technologies (of replication) in order to rival the standards of metropolitan institutions. This sense of ambition was equally detectable in the 1880s, when one Melbourne writer declared:

A colonial museum . . . should aim at a fuller comprehensiveness of representation than at home . . . that such an instructive collection must be formed of . . . reproductions, is obvious . . . but we are not therefore in a worse position . . . nor need our colonial museums be any less a complete reflex [sic] of their imperial prototypes.

(Thompson 1881: 232)

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

AURAL ANXIETIES AND THE ADVENT OF MODERNITY



John M. Picker

THE AGE OF STETHOSCOPY

This chapter seeks to trace nineteenth-century aurality as it became newly urbanized, industrialized, and commercialized, that is to say, newly modern. Traditional overviews of the Victorian period typically ignored the ways that sound shaped individuals and communities, and how responses to it articulated Victorian concerns over identity and self-definition. Yet important work from at least the late 1990s by social and cultural historians such as Peter Bailey and Steven Connor has made it harder to continue to marginalize the value of attending to Victorian soundscapes (Bailey 1998; Connor 1997, 2000). Over the course of the nineteenth century, the well-documented professionalization of the listener – in medicine, in music, in communications media – accompanied attempts to hear more, and listen more closely, than ever before (Sterne 2003). The invention of the phonograph in 1877 was in a sense the culmination of the Victorians' impulse to archive, analyze, and manipulate the sonic experiences that their era was making more rich and complex.

If the phonograph is an end point, then modern aurality begins with the stethoscope. By rendering corporeal listening into the basis of medical diagnoses, by establishing in its basic design a clinical distance between doctor and patient, the stethoscope represented the rational conquest of previously undetected sound and led to the rise of the clinically skilled listener. Yet such a development had a more problematic aspect, creating an environment in which newly amplified sound demanded attention and could become impossible to ignore. Mediate auscultation, the technical term for the sounding of the body with the stethoscope, had an obvious impact on trained medical professionals, of course: as Stanley Joel Reiser has written: 'The effects of the stethoscope on physicians were analogous to the effects of printing on Western culture' (Reiser 1978: 38). But beyond its effects on medical practice, the use of the stethoscope can be understood as a valorization of the broader cultural phenomenon of intense close listening. Nineteenth-century literary sources reveal the ways that this condition created in Britain and America new kinds of hypersensitive hearers and new manifestations of anxiety concerning Victorian identity.

Although the stethoscope was invented by Laennec in 1816, it only gradually gained acceptance in Britain and America over the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The controversy that it generated is suggested by the sceptical comments of the later physician to Queen Victoria, John Forbes, in the preface to his heavily abridged English translation (1821) of Laennec's treatise *De l'auscultation médiate*:

It must be confessed that there is something even ludicrous in the picture of a grave physician formally listening through a long tube applied to the patient's thorax, as if the disease within were a living being that could communicate its condition to the sense without. Besides, there is in this method a sort of bold claim and pretension to certainty and precision of diagnosis, which cannot, at first sight, but be somewhat startling to a mind deeply versed in the knowledge and uncertainties of our art, and to the calm and cautious habits of philosophising to which the English Physician is accustomed. On all these accounts, and others that might be mentioned, I conclude, that the new method will only in a few cases be speedily adopted, and never generally.

(Forbes 1821: xix)

For all Forbes's discomfort with mediate auscultation, his translation sold out the 500 copies of its initial printing within two years, went through four editions through 1834, and was critical in facilitating the general adoption of Laennec's stethoscope and technique across the English-speaking world (Duffin 1998: 213).

Forbes hints in his preface at the kinds of professional and corporeal anxieties that the stethoscope provoked, but for a perspective on the greater implications of this new form of close listening on the individual psyche and the culture at large, we might turn to the works of two masters of nineteenth-century fiction who admittedly make for an unlikely pair: Edgar Allan Poe and George Eliot. Poe's story, 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), with its emphasis on physiognomy and problematic vision, has often been read as a commentary on the new sensory anxieties brought about by the age of photography, although, as James Lastra observes, the story also less prominently registers the soundtrack of the modern city (Lastra 2000: 1–3). I want to suggest that Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart', published three years later, is the louder double of 'The Man of the Crowd' in its obsession with the inescapable aurality of modernity, and forms a parallel commentary on the troubling repercussions of what also should be called the age of stethoscopy. 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is, simply put, a remarkably noisy story. Indeed, in his first try at publishing it, Poe received a rejection that in more senses than one recommended turning it *down*: 'If Mr. Poe would condescend to furnish more quiet articles', it read, 'he would be a most desirable correspondent' (Poe 1843: 791). Needless to say, Poe ignored the advice.

The narrator of 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is, of course, a homicidal maniac who murders an old man and buries the corpse beneath the floor of his room. The narrator's 'disease', he tells us, 'had sharpened my senses – not destroyed – not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell' (Poe 1843: 792). Significantly, the murder is instigated by the narrator's desire to escape the stare of the old man's

‘pale blue eye, with a film over it’: ‘Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so, by degrees – very gradually – I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever’ (Poe 1843: 792). Poe highlights the anxiety produced by both the photographic ‘film’ and eye that leads to the murder, and the stethoscopic beating that leads to his narrator’s undoing. The police arrive, and as he talks to them, the narrator hears ‘*a low, dull, quick sound – much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*’ (indeed, it may even *be* a watch, as some critics have speculated, though the story does not say). The sound persists: ‘It grew louder – louder – louder! . . . hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!’ – Until it forces his admission of guilt: ‘I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! – here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous heart!’ (Poe 1843: 797).

The punning imperative at the end of the story to ‘hear, hear’ the heartbeats that are amplified for the narrator alone suggests that the ‘disease’ he suffers from is an auscultative pathology, a telltale symptom of stethoscopic modernity. Not content merely to dramatize this condition, Poe mocks the newfound power of the amplification of hidden bodily sound: in the story, the one who hears so acutely is a murderer, and his ‘patient’ is his victim. For a more sustained, less gothic, but in some ways equally worried consideration of the sociocultural impact of the stethoscope, however, we could hardly do better than to turn our ear to George Eliot.

Eliot uses an acute sense of hearing as her governing metaphor for the sympathetic connections among people that it is her work’s central project to encourage. A stethoscope appears early on, in ‘Janet’s Repentance’, one of the stories in her first published book of fiction, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, from 1857. In this story, set in the early 1830s, the instrument reveals Edgar Tryan’s internal deterioration from overwork as an evangelical preacher: ‘It was not necessary or desirable to tell Mr Tryan what was revealed by the stethoscope, but Janet knew the worst’ (Eliot 1857: 331). Throughout her subsequent novels, and in the wake of Laennec’s medical revolution, Eliot will elaborate upon the kind of stethoscopic perception that permits the attentive individual to access the invisible lives of others. Indeed, this is already articulated in ‘Janet’s Repentance’: ‘surely, surely the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him – which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion’ (Eliot 1857: 257).

Eliot’s fiction is full of hidden hearts beating for those perceptive men and women who would hear them. As she memorably put it in *Middlemarch* (1871–72) – in which a stethoscope also makes an appearance – ‘if we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence’ (Eliot 1871–72: 189). This is not an empty metaphor (few in Eliot are) but one rich with sonic associations. Behind it stand not only Eliot’s familiarity with Laennec (who is mentioned in *Middlemarch* as a potential model for the ambitious physician Tertius Lydgate), but also her knowledge of the writings of Helmholtz. Helmholtz began his work on sound in 1856, the year Eliot began writing fiction, and he delivered his important lecture ‘The Physiological Causes of Harmony in Music’, in which he explicated his resonance theory of hearing, in 1857, the year *Scenes of Clerical Life* was serialized in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Eliot and her common-law husband George Henry Lewes owned German and

French editions of Helmholtz's acoustics magnum opus *Die Lehre von der Tonempfindungen als physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik* (1863), and shortly before beginning *Middlemarch*, Eliot noted that she was reading Helmholtz on music. Helmholtz's theory of sympathetic resonance, which explained how the ear, as a kind of 'nervous piano', was able to perceive musical notes, itself sympathetically resonated with Eliot's aesthetic project to dramatize the varieties of close listening through which her characters, and by extension her readers, develop compassion and affinity (Picker 2003: 82–109).

The anxiety in Eliot's final novel, however, is the burden of the stethoscopic age: that of hearing too much and too well. Written on the other side of *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is not only Eliot's most musically invested novel but also a novel about choice. In this era of close listening, when there is so much that is new to hear, to what and whom should one listen? This is the year that the telephone was invented, after all (see [Figure 34.1](#)), and Eliot's most challenging, experimental book, like Alexander Graham Bell's device, is about learning how to answer the call, and indeed, which call to answer. Eliot's eponymous hero discovers his calling in the words of Mordecai, the consumptive visionary who guides Deronda toward a proto-Zionist quest for a Jewish homeland, which in turn denies him the more conventional expectation of a future with the widowed



Figure 34.1 Speculations about the telephone, from *Funny Folks* 3 (16 June 1877): 85 with kind permission from the British Library

Gwendolen Harleth Grandcourt, with whom he has a powerful psychological relationship. Bell and Eliot shared an interest in Helmholtzian acoustics: the technology of the telephone is premised, as is Eliot's fiction, on a broad application of the principle of sympathetic resonance. Two years after *Deronda*, Eliot attended a private demonstration of the telephone during its debut in England, marvelled at its utility, and went on to incorporate the new terminology into her prose. In the opening of a late historical novel left unfinished at her death, Eliot aligns her writing endeavour with the new mode of communications she called 'telephonic converse': 'It is a telescope you may look through a telephone you may put your ear to' (Eliot 1954–78: 7.28; Baker 1980: 10). For the author who for so long had urged closer listening to others, how apposite, then, that her fictional enterprise reached an endpoint suspended on a telephone line.

LONDON'S DIN

For Eliot, the lesson of stethoscopic modernity is that to live the most outwardly attuned life one has to make choices about where to direct one's attention, that is, one must learn to listen selectively. Such a solution eluded many of her contemporaries who could not help but hear too much of their increasingly distracting urban environment. George Augustus Sala leads off the tenth volume of Charles Dickens's *Household Words* with a passage that expounds upon the noisy soundtrack of mid-Victorian London streets:

Still must I hear! Shall the hoarse peripatetic ballad-singer bawl the creaking couplets of The Low-backed Car beneath my window; shall the summer breeze waft the strains of Pop Goes the Weasel upon my ears, and drive me to confusion, while I am endeavouring to master the difficulties of the Turkish alphabet; shall the passing butcherboy rattle his bones, and the theological beggar-man torture a psalm tune into dolorous cadences; shall the young lady in the apartment next to mine string my nerves into the rigours, while she is practising Les Souvenirs de Cracovie, with that ceaseless verbal accompaniment of one, and two, and three; one, and two, and three! Shall music in some shape or other resound from the distant costermonger and the proximate street boy; the brooding swallows sitting upon the eaves, and showing me their sunny backs; the ill-ground organ in the next street; and the beaten tom-tom and execrable caterwauling of Howadjee Lall from Bombay! To say nothing of the deep-mouthed dog next door; the parrot at number eight which is always endeavouring to whistle Il Segreto, and always trying back, and never succeeds in accomplishing more of the air than the first three-quarters of a bar; and Colonel Chumpfist's man servant over the way, who sings valorously while he cleans his master's boots in the area! Shall all these things be, and I not sing, lest haply my readers think they have already had enough and to spare, of my musical reminiscences!

(Sala 1854: 1)

This is a good example of what I would call the language of stethoscopic Victorians. Sala's anxious ear takes in many of the 'musical' disturbances that posed a special

threat to the segment of Victorian middle-class professionals, including Dickens, whose living and working spaces overlapped. How could this emerging class of brain workers support themselves and their families if their efforts were constantly interrupted by the sounds of the streets? Perhaps the most ready, though not very satisfying, answer was to do as Sala did here and make the subject of one's work the noise itself, turning a disturbance to professional labour into fodder for that labour.

A much different answer was provided by Thomas Carlyle, whose stethoscopic language as early as *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) predicted and likely influenced Eliot's in *Middlemarch*. As he wrote in *Sartor*: 'O thou philosophic Teufelsdröckh, that listenest while others only gabble, and with thy quick tympanum hearest the grass grow!' (Carlyle 1838: 251). Carlyle was known to hold forth loudly, as it were, on the value of silence: 'SILENCE, SILENCE: in a thousand senses I proclaim the indispensable worth of Silence, our only safe dwelling-place often', he wrote to Geraldine Jewsbury in 1840 (Carlyle 2007). In 1853, after years of infuriation by city noises of all kinds, especially the 'demon fowls' of neighbours, Carlyle resolved to create a space for silence at the top of his house. In September he confessed to Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'I had for 12 years had such a soundproof inaccessible Apartment schemed out in my head; and last year, under a poor helpless builder, had finally given it up: but Chelsea, as London generally, swelling out as if it were mad, grows every year noisier; a *good* builder turned up, and with a last paroxysm of enthusiasm, I set him to. My notion is, he will succeed; in which case, it will be a great possession to me for the rest of my life' (Carlyle 2007).

Carlyle's soundproof study in part grew out of his insecurity over his ambiguously gendered professional status as a home-based mental, as opposed to physical labourer – or as he put it in an 1853 letter to his wife Jane, the 'unprotected man' (Carlyle 2007). The silent room was a way for the author to claim territory domestically and sonically for so-called 'strenuously idle' masculinity. Carlyle's complicated relationship with Victorian notions of gender and professionalism was fundamentally irresolvable, and it should not be a surprise that his silent fantasy could not be realized. As he put it in 1854: 'The room considered as a *soundless* apartment may be safely pronounced an evident *failure*: I do hear all manner of sharp noises, – much reduced in intensity, but still perfectly audible' (Carlyle 2007).

The stethoscopic anxieties Carlyle experienced would reach their apex a decade or so later, when he, Dickens, and their peers petitioned in support of the 1864 Street Music Act. This legislation attempted (as with Carlyle's soundproof study, with limited success) to crack down on the growing number of organ grinders and the other working poor, mostly foreign musicians whose unpredictable soundings clashed with the quiet on which middle-class English male literary and artistic labour depended. The Street Music Act was introduced by MP Michael T. Bass, who published a collection titled *Street Music in the Metropolis* to coincide with the parliamentary debate on his bill. In the preface to the volume, Bass indicates that a widely expressed need for orderly quiet led him to publication:

I have received letters from persons of all classes expressing their gratitude to me for taking up this question, and urging me to persevere. . . . Nothing but a careful perusal of their letters could convey the anxiety felt by so many persons

for some effectual check to the daily increasing grievance of organ-grinders and street music.

(Bass 1864: v-vi)

The ‘anxiety’ Bass senses turns out to be, as his book goes on to demonstrate, not exclusively but notably, that middle-class professionals, especially those, like Carlyle, who laboured in their homes.

To understand what makes their allegations distinctive, consider for a moment this more conventional complaint from one Victor Baune, a City worker who lived on Philpot Lane:

I go home from the City, the brain overwrought, feverish, and fatigued, and I require rest and change of occupation – reading, writing, music – and these are impossible with the horrible street music from all sides – the very atmosphere impregnated with that thrice-cursed droning noise – that abomination of London which makes me ill, which positively shortens my life from the nervous fever which it engenders.

(Bass 1864: 8–9)

While engaging with widespread Victorian notions of invalidism, Baune’s horror at street music derives from a sense of entitlement and expectation in the domestic sphere. The ‘change of occupation’ he describes plays on the dual sense of ‘occupation’: as career and of space. For Baune, as for those in other established middle-class professions such as medicine and law, work and rest occupy different spaces.

Such a spatial distinction did not apply to the writers, artists, and other brainworkers who laboured in their homes. This made the aural anxieties they derived from street noise all the more intense (Picker 2003: 41–81). Chief among the aggrieved was John Leech, the *Punch* cartoonist so afflicted by organ grinding and other street music ‘nuisances’ that he met an early death ostensibly by them. Leech took frequent jabs at the organ men in his pictures of life and character. A representative example (Figure 34.2) responds to Lord Wilton’s opinion of the street organ as an ‘agreeable relief’ by presenting him as contentedly listening, not on the street but indoors and at his hearth, to one of Leech’s typically seedy looking organ grinders. The accompanying text reads: ‘We have no doubt that the same taste and intelligence, which enables the noble Earl to enjoy this exquisite noise would also allow him to eat scraped slate pencil, by way of variety to his ordinary meals’. This image unites two sentiments common enough to Leech’s circle and the burgeoning Victorian intellectual and aesthetic elite they represented: an aural anxiety borne of middle-class resentment against aristocratic privilege, on the one hand, and immigrants, itinerants, and the working poor, on the other.

Dickens’s close friendship with Leech was the likely motivation for the novelist’s petition in support of Bass’s bill. This document, which Bass published in his book, was signed by a roster of Victorian writers and artists including Carlyle, Tennyson, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Dickens, and Leech, and attacked the disturbances wrought by ‘brazen performers on brazen instruments, beaters of drums, grinders of organs, bangers of banjos, clashers of cymbals, worriers of fiddles, and bellowers of ballads’ (Bass 1864: 41). Dickens’s attitude toward organ grinders



DE GUSTIBUS, &c. &c.

My LORD WILTON finds organ-grinding an "agreeable relief," * and far be it from our wish that his Lordship's gratification should be interfered with. For our part, he is heartily welcome to our share of barrel-organ music for life, with this proviso, that he shall so place his favourite instrument that the comfort and repose of his neighbours cannot be disturbed.

We have no doubt that the same taste and intelligence, which enables the noble Earl to enjoy this exquisite noise, would also allow him to eat scraped slate pencil, by way of variety to his ordinary meals; and we sincerely wish there were some asylum, to which this refined nobleman might retire, and indulge such a relish to his heart's content. We would use all our influence to procure him admission.

* Vide Debate in the House of Lords, April 29.

Figure 34.2 Indoor street music as imagined by John Leech, from *Punch* 34 (1858): 192

worked its timely way into his contribution to the 1863 Christmas number of *All The Year Round*, 'Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings'. In terms that evoke the explosive behaviour Leech frequently illustrated in his *Punch* efforts, the landlady Lirriper recounts the defensive tactics used by her boarder Major Jemmy Jackson:

when it got about among the organ-men that quiet was our object . . . he made lion and tiger war upon them to that degree without seeing it I could not have believed it was in any gentleman to have such a power of bursting out with fire-irons walking-sticks water-jugs coals potatoes off his table the very hat off his head, and at the same time so furious in foreign languages that they would stand with their handles half turned fixed like the Sleeping Ugly – for I cannot say Beauty.
(Dickens 1863: 515–16)

In this fight, Dickens and his fellow home labourers were taking up not only Leech's cause, but also that of mathematician and computer pioneer Charles Babbage. As much as Leech did, Babbage made the war against street music in Victorian London into a personal cause célèbre. (In fact, Leech was sympathetic to Babbage's battle: the well-dressed, older, and agitated gentleman surrounded by street musicians in his 'The Quiet Street – A Sketch from a Study Window', the coloured frontispiece for the *Punch's Pocket Book* for 1856, is clearly based on Babbage.) A representative recollection of an associate conveys the extent of Babbage's efforts and notoriety:

I remember one day Mr. Babbage came down to Richmond quite in low spirits at the persecution he had received regarding the organs, etc., and I was much shocked to find when I called on some friends in Manchester Square, that there was a subscription started to encourage the organs to worry him! He told me with a dismal face that one day when he was walking in the city and just going to cross a street, a pretty little girl cried out ‘There goes old Babbage!’ He was then engaged in five actions about the brass bands, and organs, and he was in correspondence with Sir Richard Mayne, and the Home Office, for power to suppress them.

(Lloyd 1880: 65)

Bass’s Act, which passed with the strong support of Babbage in addition to Carlyle, Dickens, and their cohort, in the end did little to curtail street noises in any significant way, but it had the symbolic value of uniting this body of professionals in a territorial defence motivated by the threat of invasive sound. Such a seemingly trivial, comic conflict as the street music debate reveals the anxieties felt by (principally though not exclusively male) Victorian Londoners about the value of intellectual and aesthetic labour, the meaning of ‘music’, and more generally, the viability of middle-class masculinity in urban modernity.

DEAD RECORDS

With the invention of the phonograph in the last quarter of the century, new forms of mechanical music would fully invade the Victorian home and provoke new anxieties. The original intent of the phonograph, however, had been to record and replay not music, but the spoken word. Like the roughly parallel technology of the telephone, the phonograph was meant as a communications device, with serious implications for the reach of language and speech. Yet ‘[i]t sounds more like the devil every time’, as one listener had put it at an early demonstration, signalling the then commonplace notion that the machine was possessed by a (likely sinister) force from beyond (Conot 1979: 109). To the extent that the sound of the voice was identified with a speaking body, to listen to the phonograph was a further application of the Victorian invention of binaural stethoscopy, by which I mean listening with both ears to the sounds of the body. Yet in this case ‘the body’, fixed on cylinder as voice, had become a new kind of remnant and reminder of the physical presence of the speaker. If Helmholtz had managed to disenchant the sound of the voice by delineating the components of tone and the elements of hearing, users of the fin-de-siècle phonograph succeeded in re-enchanting the voice as a mystical sound from beyond the grave.

From as early as 1878, shortly after he invented the phonograph, Thomas Edison publicly expressed his hopes to persuade celebrities around the globe to make records for him that would constitute an uncanny archive, what would come to be called a ‘Library of Voices’. The person who would attempt to realize Edison’s archival project was Colonel George E. Gouraud, his principal overseas agent, who had played a major role in the European introduction of his telephone and lighting system, and who became the most vocal phonograph enthusiast in Britain. Gouraud would go on to record, or at least attempt to record, a wide range of Victorians

for posterity, including the likes of Arthur Sullivan, Florence Nightingale, Henry Morton Stanley, Wilkie Collins, and many others (Read and Welch 1976: 137; Picker 2003: 110–26). Gouraud himself was a native New Yorker and decorated Civil War veteran described by a later acquaintance in these words:

Gouraud is a man of majestic stature and grandeur. He does not go; he proceeds. He wears his white hair long, down on his shoulders. His mustachios are twisted, and stick out fiercely, at irregular right angles from his lips. His eyes are not in tune. He wears a costume which, with his long hair, makes him look like Buffalo Bill gone stark, staring mad. . . . If he ever writes a book, the title ought to be EMPERORS WHO HAVE MET ME.

(Lindsay 1997: 229)

When it came to the phonograph, the Victorian scientific impulse to render sound material mingled with the concurrent fascination with spiritualism, hauntings, and the culture of death, which played out in a distinctive way with the afterlife of a recording of the deceased that was intended for Edison's Library of Voices. This record, the earliest of a major literary figure, testifies to the anxious self-consciousness the phonograph often provoked. The record originated during an 1889 dinner party attended by Robert Browning and Gouraud, after which Gouraud directed Browning, who was known to object to public speaking, to talk into the phonograph. Browning began to recite his 'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix', but doesn't get very far:

[*Gouraud*:] My dear Edison, my dear Edison. I have sent you by the means of the phonograph several interesting souvenirs of its brief residence in London. Nothing that I have sent you will be more welcome to you than the words which will follow now – words that are none other than those of one of England's – I may say, of one of England and *America's* most distinguished poets: those of Robert Browning. Now listen to his voice.

[*Browning*:]

I sprang to the saddle, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;
'Speed!' echoed the – er – [*pause*]
Then the gates shut behind us, the lights sank to rest [*pause*]
I'm terribly sorry, but I don't remember my own verses; but one thing
which I shall remember all my life is, the astonishing sensation produced
upon me by your wonderful invention.
Robert Browning!

[*Gouraud*:] Bravo bravo bravo! Hip hip hooray . . .

In his introduction, which is omitted from most commercial versions of this recording, Gouraud makes a point of situating Browning within a transatlantic literary context, which Browning discreetly takes up with his choice of a poem about a distantly travelling message.

The driving meter of ‘How They Brought the Good News’ produces the rhythmic gallop that acts as an aid to memory. It is no accident variations on ‘gallop’ appear five times in the opening stanza (as published) alone:

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
‘Good speed!’ cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
‘Speed!’ echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

(Browning 1845: 395)

If Browning’s mid-stanza breakdown seems to parallel those of the poem’s two of three horses that falter on their way to Aix, that is because the work itself is an antiquated transportation poem, and of a fabricated event, at that. Published in the midst of the Railway Boom of the 1840s, Browning’s poem creates a horse-powered history that never happened in order to reflect on the bewildering rhythms of a steam-powered present. The ‘iron horse’ of the railway not only was remaking the English landscape in the period of the poem’s composition but also the Belgian one, where the newly created Kingdom had from the mid 1830s a ‘primary objective’ in its railway building ‘to establish international lines of communication across the borders’ (Laffut 1983: 205–06). As the *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*, first published in the 1830s, would go on to note some years later: ‘Belgium, from the level surface of the country, is peculiarly well suited for railroads, which can be constructed at much less cost here than in England, and have in consequence extended their ramifications through all parts of the kingdom’ (*A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* 1851: 92–93). Written in August 1844, ‘How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix’ indirectly acknowledges this contemporaneous technological breakthrough in communications and international travel: the ‘good news’ of the 1843–44 completion of the costly, complicated railway line linking Ghent and Belgium with Aix-la-Chapelle and Prussia. The *Handbook for Travellers* provides an apt description of the accomplishment: ‘The country between Liège and Aix-la-Chapelle presented serious obstacles to the formation of a railway, which have been overcome only by the utmost skill and arduous exertions of the engineer. The cost exceeded 25,000,000 francs; there are no less than 19 tunnels in the Belgian part of the line alone, so that it has been compared to a needle run through a corkscrew’ (*A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* 1851: 177).

In 1844, one no longer had to bring the good news from Ghent to Aix on horseback but could use the ‘iron horse’, or even the telegraph. This, counter-intuitively, is the poem’s underlying implication, coming as it does from the pen of a master of indirection whose curve of poetic line also might be ‘compared to a needle run through a corkscrew’. It ultimately makes sense for Browning to etch by phonograph needle, or at least start to, his covert railway verse on Edison’s communications breakthrough in 1888 with the knowledge that his message will be carried back to the States. Yet the poem never makes the ‘good news’ – whatever that apparently vital message turns out to be – known to the reader. Or listener,

especially the listener to the Browning recording. Browning stops short in the delivery of a poem that stops short of what might be called full media disclosure. The ‘good news’ is delivered to Aix, but it is never delivered to *us*. There is pathos in Browning’s forgetfulness, certainly; and yet we are left to wonder if this forgetfulness also is telling after he chooses such an appropriate poem to break off delivering. Browning’s botched recital on phonograph paradoxically also constitutes a critical reading of this circuitous railway poem. (My argument gathers steam from Yopie Prins’s 2008 exploration of the close connections among Browning’s poetry and nineteenth-century American railways, art song, and early film.)

After Browning’s death in December 1889, the wax cylinder recording was used in an unprecedented form of poet worship. In December 1890, for the first anniversary of the poet’s funeral, F. J. Furnivall, president of the London Browning Society, brought together Gouraud and others for what Browning’s sister called an ‘indecent séance’: ‘Poor Robert’s dead voice to be made interesting amusement’, she wrote in a letter to Katherine Bradley, ‘God forgive them all. I find it difficult’ (Peterson 1969: 29–30). The event was illustrated in W. T. Stead’s *Review of Reviews*, where it was titled ‘A Voice from the Dead’ (Figure 34.3). (It is no coincidence that Stead was a noted spiritualist.) The thumbnail image in the upper right corner is based on an actual photo of Browning, but by the way it is positioned, he appears to be looking down on the proceedings somewhat chagrined. It is not clear if that is because he is depressed by the number of apparently respectable people who are listening to, as the caption puts it, ‘the actual voice of a dead man’, or if he is just horrified by the artist’s shoddy work in this Monty Pythonesque illustration. Juxtapose Browning’s expression with the confident, youthful one of Edison, looking out from the opposite corner, as Gouraud stands in the middle of them, the go-between overseeing the inventor’s machine. The portraits frame the agent in a way similar to Gouraud’s introductory framing of Browning’s original recording, which emphasized the capture of a transatlantic poet, not merely an English one.

What is especially interesting about this image is the absence of a phonograph horn, which might be expected on a home device, and instead the presence of six headsets, or what were called at the time ‘hearing tubes’. Jonathan Sterne has traced the way that modern headset culture evolved from the invention of the binaural stethoscope by Arthur Leared in 1851 (Sterne 2003: 154–77). The binaural stethoscope can be regarded as a quintessential Victorian invention: the first documented appearance of Leared’s device is as an item on display at the Great Exhibition, whose catalogue describes it as a ‘double stethoscope, made of gutta percha’ (*Great Exhibition* 1851: 477). Several phonograph models in the 1880s and 1890s were intended to be used with binaural headsets, such as dictation phonographs and coin-in-the-slot machines in phonograph parlours.

The evolution of the headset also represents the development of what Sterne calls ‘private acoustic space’ in the fin de siècle. The Browning recording was made in a period when the skill doctors applied in listening to the body through the stethoscope migrated into phonography and, in Sterne’s words, into ‘a specific kind of bourgeois sensibility *about* hearing and acoustic space’ (Sterne 2003: 161, 159–60). The phonograph headset in the *Review of Reviews* illustration can be thought of as a disembodied stethoscope, in the sense that the participants are listening not to



Figure 34.3 Replaying Robert Browning, from *Review of Reviews* 5 (1892): 468

a live body but to a speech machine playing the voice of an absent corpse. (The figure on the left, Dr Furnival, in particular seems to strike the pose of a listening doctor.) The illustration captures the moment, and the crude rendering I think only draws attention to this, when the move was on to privatize and make clinical and respectable the middle-class activity of close listening to reproduced sound, even if, as in this early case, that meant the sound of a botched recital. The late Victorian phonograph turned Browning the unconventional poet into Browning the awkward sound object, a fitting finale for a century of tense sonic transition.

CODA: ON THE AIR

There is irony, of course, in Browning's progression, from the ventriloquist who had disappeared behind his career-defining dramatic monologues to the recorded persona left speechless for worshipful Victorians. The rendering of Browning mute as well as invisible by the phonograph was part of its larger effect of severing the traditional presumed connection between sound and source. In doing so, the machine raised troubling questions about the relationship among the listener, the speaker, and the spoken word. Ivan Kreilkamp has written persuasively of the 'phonographic logic' that underlies Joseph Conrad's 1899 *Heart of Darkness* (Kreilkamp 2006: 179–205). Yet even by the time of H. G. Wells's fin-de-siècle scientific romance *The Invisible Man* (1897), which was a major influence on Conrad's tale, the novelty of disembodiment made possible by late Victorian sound technologies had become an established fact, prompting Wells's speculation about the significance of invisible speakers in the late Victorian soundscape.

The Invisible Man is on one level a pastiche of the Victorian fascination with the experience of phonographic and telephonic speech, in that Wells's protagonist Griffin never achieves total disembodiment. For nearly the entire novel, Griffin's face remains bandaged, masked, or invisible, and Griffin registers in the text acoustically, as voice. Well before, and after, readers learn his name, the narrator repeatedly refers to Griffin as 'the aerial voice' or simply 'the Voice' (Wells 1897: 39, 43ff.). The initial impression Griffin makes on others is that of a quasi-spiritual authority, or as one of them puts it, 'A voice out of heaven!' (Wells 1897: 48). Griffin's godlike aspiration to be an invisible voice runs up against an insurmountable problem, however: his body. Wells makes the point succinctly enough when he follows Griffin's comment: 'Help me, and I will do great things for you. An invisible man is a man of power', with the narrator's aside, 'He stopped for a moment to sneeze violently' (Wells 1897: 48). That ill-timed sneeze humorously indicates that the attainment of transcendent vocality that Griffin apparently desires, and that the phonograph was purported to enable, is impossible. His is what Michel Chion has called, with reference to film sound, 'a half-embodied voice' (Chion 1994: 128).

And yet Griffin's status becomes more than a mere send-up of late Victorian phonographic fantasies. On the one hand, the genealogy of the invisible man can be traced all the way back at least to *Sartor Resartus*, where, as Kate Flint reminds us, Carlyle had cautioned that 'the unseen may be more powerful than the seen' (Flint 2000: 20). On the other hand, Wells is also looking ahead: the first radio station (in nascent form, as wireless telegraphy station) opened in 1897, the year *The Invisible Man* was published, and the book seems conscious of the risks of a technological future – in this case, the social functions of sound on the air. Wells represents Griffin's body as an unstable racial presence and in doing so captures the special dynamic of early recorded and broadcast sound, which challenged what Lisa Gitelman has called 'the *visuality of music*, the sum of visual experiences that bolster and accompany musical practice and that extend to the societal norms of visually apprehending racial and other differences' (Gitelman 1999: 125).

The phonograph, telephone, and radio permitted new kinds of invisibility that at once obscured but in different ways drew attention to what might be called the

face of race. Wandering naked yet invisible through London, Griffin hears, he says, ‘a blare of music’ that turns out to be the inevitable Salvation Army Band, ‘chanting in the roadway and scoffing on the pavement’: ‘Thud, thud, thud came the drum with a vibrating resonance’ (Wells 1897: 105). In one of Wells’s better little blasphemies, the hymn they sing is identified as ‘When shall we see his face?’ (Wells 1897: 105). This question pinpoints a key (if not *the* key) aural anxiety of electrified modernity. *The Invisible Man*, Wells would write much later, is ‘a tale, that thanks largely to the excellent film recently produced by James Whale, is still read as much as it ever was. To many young people nowadays I am just the author of the *Invisible Man*’ (Wells 1934: 475). That bit of self-deprecation indicated a larger truth: if many people in 1934 only associated Wells with *The Invisible Man*, perhaps that was because Wells had become one on the radio, welcoming his transformation into an invisible voice when he began broadcasting his periodic talks on the BBC in 1929, as the radio craze took hold in Britain. In this way as in so many others, Wells’s late Victorian fiction oversteps the ostensible boundary of its era. The initial Victorian forays into the technological manipulation of sound as well as the anxieties these practices raised would find their legacy in unlikely places, including one of the most powerful examinations of the social consequences of urban modernity in the twentieth century. With more than a nod toward Wells, Ralph Ellison famously frames his novel *Invisible Man* (1952) as a pirate radio station broadcast: ‘Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?’ (Ellison 1952: 581).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

LEISURE Merrie to modern



Peter Bailey

Just as they revolutionized work and industrial production, so too did the Victorians transform leisure, play and consumption. There were significant elements of continuity and adaptation, conflict and resistance, but change and modernity predominated. George Eliot lamented the passing of ‘Old Leisure’, its familiar, unhurried pleasures supplanted by a modern appetite for novelty and sensation. Contemplating a dramatically transformed new leisure world *The Times* discerned ‘a great revolution . . . great displacement of masses, momentous changes of level’. Leisure was now frontier territory, provoking both wonder and disquiet in a lengthy discourse on the ‘problem of leisure’, played out across the unsettling passage from a more traditional to a modern capitalist mass culture in a democratizing urban industrial society. What did the older leisure landscape look like and did it really die; how, when and by whom or what did major changes come about; how did they affect social life and popular experience, and with what consequences for the larger issues of cultural politics and the quality of life (Bailey 1999; Borsay 2006)?

Eliot’s old leisure was typically rural, patterned by the seasonal tasks of the agricultural year and the religious calendar. Feast days and ‘holydays’ were communally celebrated, answering to the prescriptions of ritual and custom in the vital business of fertility, production and survival, from Whitsun and Mayday to the Harvest Feast. Festivities could be boisterous, grotesque and excessive, carnivalesque episodes of relative licence and plentiful provision in a re-enactment of folk ideals of utopia. Games and sports were brutal to humans and animals alike. Feast days both sustained and relieved the social hierarchy of rural society. Squire and parson dispensed the largesse of food and drink, mixing with the crowd in the ritualized saturnalian conceit of inversion or abolition of rank, a world momentarily turned upside down or amiably egalitarianized (Malcolmson 1973; Golby and Purdue 1984; Griffin 2005).

In the counties, aristocratic families, historical exemplars of the classical good life, pursued their inheritance of good taste and gentility in the leisure centres and theme parks that were their great country houses and estates. Lord and lady dispensed festive hospitality to tenants and villagers, noblesse oblige deployed with

THE DAY'S DOINGS. DERBY NUMBER

An Illustrated Journal of Romantic Events, Reports, Sporting & Theatrical News, at Home & Abroad.

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[PRICE SIXPENCE.
Twenty-Two Pages.]



Figure 35.1 *Day's Doings*, Derby Number, 27 May 1871, London

a common touch. In a more robust tradition aristocratic males were devotees of field sports, notably hunting and shooting. Horse racing and pugilism (the turf and the ring) mobilized a cross-class fraternity of ‘peer and peasant’ enamoured of the bottle and the bet, though the rural upper classes were becoming more caste conscious and exclusive, not least in their pleasures. Eliot personified ‘Old Leisure’ as a country gentleman absorbed in the private recreations of his estate (Cannadine 1990; Horn 1999; Vamplew 1976).

Everyday rural sociability focused on the ale house, the village green, the church and chapel where sacred and profane coexisted and competed in cross-cutting lines of attraction and denial. The church choir might process directly from Sunday service to the pub, an institution eschewed by the Methodist chapel whose members enjoyed the intense fellowship of its song and love feasts but for whom much else in popular recreation was worldly and corrupt. Country people largely made their own amusements, enlivened by travelling showmen, circuses and ‘fit-up’ theatres also playing the local fairs that added to the festive calendar (Horn 1999).

Early nineteenth-century towns duplicated many features of rural leisure while enjoying more sophisticated amenities in a more socially stratified society. As with rural production, work and leisure were similarly integrated in artisanal trades and small-scale industries where drink and sociability eased the workshop routine. Leisure, for recuperation as much as celebration, was preferred over further earnings, hence the extension of the weekend with St Monday, a plebeian addition to the seasonal and religious observances that also shaped the festive calendar of towns. Town fairs combined business and recreation, drawing in villagers just as rural fairs drew out townspeople. Market days offered a similar mix of folk and function, generating a ‘market merry’ atmosphere well serviced by the licensed trade, accommodating popular sports and games including unruly versions of football. Theatres, assembly rooms, lending libraries and promenades were patronized by a more respectable, self-consciously refined middle- and upper-class clientele increasingly distancing itself from the crowds in the street (Borsay 2006; Cunningham 1980; Storch 1982).

With its wide range of social and economic services the Victorian public house and garden constituted the institutional hub of popular recreation, hosting games, plays, debates, concerts, flower shows and the regular meetings of lodges, trades’ and friendly societies. Together with mutual self-help the latter offered sociability and entertainment throughout the year and annual feasts, ‘beanos’ or ‘blow-outs’ of epic proportions. Men of substance and local standing publicans were prominent patrons of popular culture. Hosts and stakeholders to sporting fraternities, some presided over illicit sports like cock or dogfighting and the gambling on all such contests (Girouard 1975; Harrison 1971).

By far the biggest city in the kingdom whose population tripled in the first 50 years of the century, London offered a proliferation of attractions, from select assemblies of court and high society to a twilight world of low-life pleasures, a veritable modern Babylon to its critics. Greater commercialized provision came in the increased size and number of its theatres, the establishment of the modern circus on permanent sites and a boom in various kinds of exhibitions. Vauxhall and Cremorne were large pleasure gardens catering to a broad social mix; pub tea gardens gave London’s lower orders a welcome taste of *rus in urbe*. Much the commonest

site of recreation was the street where Henry Mayhew recorded a host of small time entertainers playing to the swarming crowds. The four day Bartholomew Fair in Smithfield market was the capital's greatest traditional carnival. Long assailed as the very symbol and engine of drunkenness, immorality and riot, 'Old Bartlemy' was closed by the City Corporation and its Nonconformist members in 1855 (Assael 2005; Nead 2000; White 2008).

A long-standing puritanical concern to discipline popular recreations intensified in the early Victorian period, fuelled by an evangelical religious revival, the 'moral gospel' of respectability, and fear of an insurgent populace reactivated by the mass agitation of the Chartists and other radicals. State authorities and middle-class reformers undertook a campaign of control and repression. In London the new Metropolitan police, the first modern professional force, ended the traditional bull running on Easter Monday while 'moving on' street performers offending the utilitarian ideal of unobstructed thoroughfares. The police put down bull running in Stamford under new legislation against cruelty to animals and curtailed Shrove Tuesday football in Derby. Sabbatarians tried but failed to close the pubs and much else on Sundays but postponed the Sunday opening of the British Museum until 1896. Most extensive and best organized of the reformers, the temperance movement campaigned for legislation against the pub and drink trade with evangelical zeal (Harrison 1971).

Compounding the pressures of reform and repression came the impact of industrialization in the new industrial towns of the 1830 and 1840s, where the people's leisure was not only besieged but by some accounts almost extinguished. The new work discipline of the factory, longer hours, population growth, rapid urbanization, overcrowding and extensive poverty put the squeeze on time, space, money and energy. Leisure was severed from its traditional moorings in work, custom and community. Singing, drinking and 'larking' were forbidden in the factory. Outside of work a more anonymous, impersonal aggregation of urban newcomers lacked community, existing facilities were under attack or inadequate, upper-class patrons and participants withdrew still further. Time off produced either terminal torpor or frenzied release: the quickest way out of Manchester, they said, was by bottle. A newly compartmentalized locus in time and space, modern leisure seemed potentially open-ended in its freedoms, a threat to social order and the work ethic more insidious than that of an older popular culture, demanding yet more rigorous controls (Bailey 1987; Cunningham 1990).

Yet traditional institutions survived or adapted, new forms flourished, workers fought back as conditions marginally improved. As entertainments took primacy over commerce, fairs that escaped closure drew bigger crowds fed by the railways. Pub concert rooms expanded in size and number. By 1851 in Preston, Coketown in Dickens' *Hard Times*, singing saloons were reportedly 'numerous, prosperous and constantly well-attended'. Commercial initiative was also manifest in the makeover of big city pubs into gin palaces, whose opulent amenities and efficient service were designed to maximize patronage and profit from 'the millions at the door'. Brass bands that with secular mass choirs became a compelling pursuit of the Northern working classes started with instruments provided by paternalist bosses. The traditional Lancashire wakes, annual summer festivals of religious origin, retained a local community identity while morphing into a modern moveable



Figure 35.2 'Seaside'. Photo, Robert Slingsby, 1885

feast, as factory workers converted wakes week into holidays at seaside resorts opened up by the new railways. Working people resisted attacks upon customary pleasures. At Stamford the police needed the army to put down bull running; legislation to close London pubs on Sundays was withdrawn in the face of opposition riots (Bailey 1987; Russell 1997).

Workers created their own alternative cultural worlds and clawed back leisure time. Chartist associations provided recreation free from indoctrination by the church and the debilitations of the pub. The 'new moral world' of Owenite utopian communities offered a similarly improving and abstemious regime, though their passion for dancing drew severe censure. In 1847 Lancashire textile workers secured a reduction in working hours with the Ten Hours Bill, acknowledging the modern separation of work and leisure into exclusive domains while bidding for a more humane balance between the two.

The new railway was a prime engine of leisure modernization. A country-wide network by mid century, the railway democratized travel and personal mobility, shrinking time and costs while reinforcing the disciplines of modern clock time and its schedules, the servant of both profit and morality. In 1841 Thomas Cook, Leicester temperance reformer, organized an early rail excursion, removing workers from the corruptions of the local races, achieving commercial success in the new business of travel agent, home and abroad. A large proportion of six million visitors to the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace in 1851 came by train, many

from industrial districts, their orderly conduct impressing observers fearful of the descent of the mob while demonstrating the market potential in tourism and catering on a national scale.

The Ten Hours Act and the Crystal Palace were symbolic and material turning points in the growth and restructuring of mid-Victorian leisure. Further gains in free time, improved earnings and political stability recommended the leisure market to entrepreneurial showmen and publicans exploiting a wide range of new technologies and manufactures. Liberal capitalism afforded its working-class subordinates a fuller sense of membership through a greater share of its economic surplus and the extension of the franchise in the Reform Act of 1867. Gladstone, 'The People's William', a model of fiscal prudence, delivered a popular bounty in his budgets, reducing tariffs on champagne and tobacco, vital accessories of the good time and plebeian fantasies of plenty.

With a general improvement in living standards, the mid-Victorian middle classes indulged more readily in new leisure opportunities, disregarding older taboos while maintaining sufficient moral vigilance to preserve their respectability and self-regard as a class. Home and family constituted the ideal site. Reading, from a widening range of materials, was a favourite pastime, the novel shedding its previous stigma. There were moderately priced pianos for the ladies of the house, and musical evenings (with cheap sheet music) for the family. Christmas, a sentimental and marketing triumph, was an instant Victorian tradition, imported from Germany with Prince Albert. Cheap domestic service and Mrs Beeton encouraged a vogue for dinner parties. Suburban gardens were another suitably secluded amenity. Here family and guests could play lawn tennis or croquet, innovations of the 1870s under aristocratic patronage particularly popular with women, providing 'fresh air and flirtation in agreeable combination' while approximating the resources and cachet of the aristocratic country house (Bailey 1987: 88; Flanders 2006).

Obligated by liberal principles to acknowledge the freedoms justly claimed for leisure – 'Free trade and free self-culture are all bound up in the same bundle' – yet still hostile to much popular recreation, middle-class reformers tempered repression with an alternative regime of 'rational recreation' (Bailey 1987: 105). Measured, moralized and purposive, rational recreation offered counter attractions of a respectable and improving nature. In 1860s Coventry, the middle class instituted penny readings to mollify the unemployed – 'amusement as well as gratification in the higher sense'. The London Coffee Tavern Company of 1874 offered entertainment as well as cheap non-alcoholic refreshments. In 1880, London's famous Old Vic theatre became the Royal Victoria Coffee Music Hall. Chafing at the didactic and missionary tone of such projects, working men appropriated them to their own ideals. Seeking class reconciliation after the divisions of Chartism, Reverend Henry Solly pioneered drink-free workingmen's clubs. Meeting resistance to his autocratic methods, Solly yielded to members' claims to self government and the 'social glass' whereupon the movement thrived (Bailey 1987; Beaven 2005).

Prominent supporters of temperance and similar reform movements hostile to traditional recreations, religious leaders condemned the new commercialized leisure and its hold on the young, seeking morally sound counter attractions with limited success. Formed in 1844, the Young Men's Christian Association provided refuge from the temptations of the big city; faltering membership by the 1860s obliged

the movement to offer amusements as well as religious instruction. Sunday schools in 1850s Bolton countered the town's fledgling music halls with songs, sketches and excursions, failing to hold onto their young charges in adulthood. The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement, originating in West Bromwich in 1875 as antidote to a persistent local passion for cockfighting, promised to be 'Brief, Bright and Brotherly'. Amid reports of declining attendances, young priests sought to win workers back to church by leading them in 'muscular Christianity', a feature of the new reformed and rationalized sports (Reid 2000).

In structure, practice, ideology and impact, modern sports were a striking vehicle of change and innovation in Victorian life and leisure. Middle-class males led the way with an organised athleticism pioneered in the reformed public schools. Founded in 1863, the Football Association exemplified the new model: codified, disciplined, nationally regulated and, compared to the free-for-all of its folk predecessor, tidily conformist with modern economies of time and space. The new sports boasted impeccable credentials, refreshing mind and body for work, fostering muscular Christianity, national preparedness, team spirit, fair play and manliness shorn of brutality. Class reconciliation proved less successful. The preserve of gentlemen amateurs, the new Athletics Association expressly barred 'mechanics and artisans' for fear of social contamination. By contrast working men appropriated soccer as their own game, deserting church clubs and sporting vicars for less missionary patronage and eventual professionalism. The 'handling game' of rugby football remained a largely middle-class sport in the amateur tradition, though spawning a secessionist professional variant in the working-class North of England (Collins 2009; Holt 1989; Mason 1980; Walvin 1994). Emerging as the other great national team sport, cricket remained an anomaly in the new regime. A product of aristocratic patronage and the village green in the previous century, cricket assumed a wider organized presence with the inception of the County Championship in 1873, spreading rapidly as an urban spectator sport despite resistance from its upper-class governors. Professional players remained deferentially lower class in a game maintaining the gentleman amateur ethos and a bucolic pace and duration (Sandiford 1994).

Though blood sports were driven underground, other traditional sports flourished, retaining much of their cross-class fraternity and raffish subculture. Horse racing was more regulated, charging admission for newly enclosed courses, but gambling remained its lifeblood. The biggest event in the racing calendar, the Derby thrived as the greatest of all days out for which the House of Commons continued to adjourn until 1892. Calling the Englishman at play 'the beast that explodes', a Frenchman described Derby Day as 'an outlet for a year's repression' (Bailey 1987: 98). The annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race on the Thames was a similarly boisterous occasion. Boxing underwent some reform as bare fists surrendered to gloves under the Marquess of Queensbury rules, another example of the prevailing aristocratic presence in 'the sporting life' (Holt 1989; Huggins and Mangan 2004).

A major channel for publicity and a prime recreation in itself was the press: newspapers and periodicals, tourist guides and instructional manuals, the three decker novel and a sea of cheap literature. Production was greatly cheapened and increased with the steam press and abolition of taxes on advertising, newspapers

and paper. As the first Sunday paper in 1843 the *News of the World* with its partiality to crime and scandal was a significant new adjunct to the working-class weekend. The most prolific popular author was radical G. W. M. Reynolds, whose fictional *Mysteries of London* was the longest running cheap serial publication of its kind. The 'enforced leisure' of the train journey encouraged reading, serviced by railway book stalls, the first of his multiple outlets opened by W. H. Smith at Euston in 1848, a significant example of expanding commercialization.

The introduction of limited liability in the mid-Victorian years released a rush of venture capital into the leisure business, most conspicuously in the proliferation of music halls, commodified transplants of pub-variety entertainment to larger, grander premises with cheap admission. London boasted 33 by 1866, average capacity 1,500, a prototype modern entertainment industry with a national network of touring artists, high-profile stars, professional song writers, hit songs and hype. Middle-class observers condemned the 'sham gentility' of adoring lower-class youth emulating stars such as 'Champagne Charlie' George Leybourne in their assumption of fashionable dress, drink and the lordly good time. Aniline dyes, electroplated jewellery and ready-made tailoring gave new range and colour to the popular wardrobe, generating a greater sensitivity to self-image and display reflected and produced by the great mirrors lining music halls and gin palaces, and the cheap photography of cartes de visite. The new social spaces provided a stage for the rehearsal of collective and individual identities in the more fluid and impersonal world of the big city, encouraged by a growing literature of instruction in managing appearance and its codes, an absorbing leisure drama (Bailey 1998a).

Alongside music halls grand new public buildings in big provincial cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds afforded a middle-class elite a more august but equally self-regarding stage for ritual displays of cultural authority and superior taste. Local government combined with philanthropy to build art galleries, museums, libraries and concert halls, monuments to high culture while open to a wider public. Municipalities worked with private companies and local landowners (often aristocrats), extending and improving seaside resorts, whose grand new piers were the spectacular sites and symbols of holiday pleasures. City parks, similarly funded, compensated for the erosion of the open spaces of the street and older urban gardens built over or regulated out of existence, as were London's old-style pleasure gardens. Public and private interests greatly increased the stock of leisure amenities as part of the proper resources of the modern city. Glasgow listed its commercial entertainments, formerly a target of severe religious censure, among its foremost attractions (Bennett 1995; Gunn 2000; Maloney 2003).

Despite social unrest, extensive poverty and international tensions, Britain in the late Victorian and Edwardian years, no less than France, enjoyed its own belle époque, whose joie de vivre countered if it did not eliminate the social and critical angst of the fin de siècle. While still a dynamic field, the new leisure world became more stabilized and assured, structurally and normatively. Capitalism could now safely concede its workers more frequent and regular breathing space, with standardised instalments at the end of the day, the new 'English week-end' and, ideally, the end of the year, when an annual summer holiday clinched the trade-off between work and leisure, capital and labour. The Bank Holidays Act of 1871 endorsed the new dispensations. Together with reductions in working hours came

significant gains in earnings as average per capita incomes rose from the slender margin of 25 per cent above subsistence in 1870 to a comfortable 150 per cent above in 1914. At the same time changes in the workplace – subdivision of labour and scientific management in service as well as manufacturing sectors – further reduced the satisfactions of work, giving ‘life off the job’ enhanced saliency in the emotional economy. Proscriptive caveats lost much of their force; what had been offered conditionally before was now claimed as a just entitlement of citizenship. Sociologist Charles Booth reported in 1913 that for London’s poor, ‘How shall we be amused?’ was as much a priority as securing the material basics of life. For a large proportion of the industrial working class, the new leisure had become assimilated to a way of life so settled and familiar it was soon labelled ‘traditional’, as specifically modern routines gained a ritual resonance and accelerated antiquity (Bailey 2007; Hobsbawm 1984; Joyce 1991).

In the mid 1880s renewed revelations of poverty in London’s East End and violent protests from socialists and the unemployed produced the settlement movement. Earnest upper-class men and women, self-elected social workers descended upon the poor anxious to bond, mixing lectures with boxing and athletics. ‘Slumming’ became a fashionable pursuit, earning Toynbee Hall, the most famous settlement, an entry in Baedeker, the modern tourist guide. In 1887 the vast new People’s Palace, brainchild of novelist Walter Besant, offered East Enders a similarly idealised blend of instruction and entertainment (Koven 2004). The most aggressive visitation on the poor was mounted by the Salvation Army under General William Booth, who declared war on drink and intemperance, buying up the popular Eagle Tavern, replacing its entertainments with hallelujah meetings, a mix of religion and recreation pursued with street sermons, hymn singing and marching bands. Uniformed youth organizations of mainly religious foundation appeared in the 1880s with similar alternative recreations of music and drill; the Boy Scouts followed suit with a broader mix of service and adventure (Childs 1992; White 2008).

By the 1880s big city pleasure seekers were served by a national leisure industry of closely related corporate interests in entertainment, catering, retail and the press. London’s West End offered the richest concentration of venues – cafes, restaurants, grand hotels, department stores, exhibition halls, music halls – as well as refurbished staple attractions in handsome new pubs and theatres. The new venues answered to modern priorities of order and efficiency, catering to a greater volume of consumers in more specialized purpose-built premises, well appointed, well serviced and moderately while differentially priced. The typical metropolitan consumer was increasingly drawn from an expanded suburban lower middle class, for whom cheap and extensive transport by rail, tube, bus and tram brought the whole city within easy reach.

The press enjoyed a further surge in growth, boosted by increased popular literacy from the introduction of state education in 1870. By 1900 daily papers were read by one adult in every five, Sunday papers by one in three. New mass-circulation titles included *Tit-bits* (1880) a weekly magazine and leisure digest, and the *Daily Mail* (1896) the first halfpenny national, ‘a paper for clerks written by clerks’. A burgeoning advertising industry hailed the crowd in the press and on the street. A Rip Van Winkle character from 1908 confronted with London’s street-scape after 40 years’ seclusion is astounded by ‘gigantic posters in every available

space': 'All had to do with food and pleasure, endless invitations to debauchery with ham, tea and beer, and an astonishing quantity of pleasure palaces' (Bailey 2007: 89).

Music halls were the most prominent pleasure palaces as the industry reached its dominant position in popular entertainment. By 1906, Moss Empires, the leading brand, billed itself 'The Largest Amusement Organisation in the World', with 40 halls across the country; almost a half of all remaining halls were under some form of syndicate control, subject to centralized management and integrated programming. Orderly consumption, if still a little rough around the edges, was as much a management imperative as orderly production. Opulently restyled as 'theatres of variety', the music halls were models of efficient logistics, channelling the crowd into standard twice-nightly houses while stabilizing audience behaviour with new price, space and time controls. Local government building regulations set new safety standards, forcing the closure of smaller halls amid suggestions that the authorities favoured the big syndicate halls for their greater orderliness and propriety. Still vulnerable to reform attacks for encouraging drink, vice and indecency, the industry had done much to clean house and stage, offering a respectably disreputable approximation of rational recreation excused by its good order (Bailey 1998a; Kift 1996).

Music hall's appeal centred on the mildly subversive comic realism of its songs, reproducing the adventures and misadventures of everyday life, but the halls were also feverishly topical, 'modern' and up to date. Spectacular presentations featured the successive sensations of the bicycle, automobile and aeroplane. Performers embraced the new inventions off stage, cycling, motoring and flying to publicise their stylish role in the vanguard of modern living. The greater comfort and decorum of the new variety theatres attracted more fashionable custom, achieving the highest accolade in 1912 with a Royal Command Performance, the exclusion of leading star Marie Lloyd for her risqué wit an indication of the industry's concern for its respectable image. The pop music of its day, music hall was attacked for threatening to extinguish the folk songs of merrie England as the authentic voice of its people. Yet music hall was also championed as a robustly English modern folk art holding ground against an invasion of syncopated American song and dance forms that proved wildly popular in the years before 1914 (Bailey 1998b; Horrall 2001; Russell 1997).

Theatre enjoyed a major boom from the late century with new buildings, modern management and increased patronage from a middle class shedding moral reservations about playgoing. The Savoy Theatre on the Strand, opened in 1881, exemplified the trend. Lit by the new electricity, the Savoy was home to Gilbert and Sullivan operetta and national and international touring shows of the brand, its introduction of first nights providing the glamour of a fashionable social event. The most popular new genre was musical comedy, the prototype modern musical, its London productions also packaged for wide distribution. Set in the department stores, hotels, restaurants and exhibitions that were prime destinations for modern leisure and romantic adventure, musical comedy offered compelling social scripts for its fans, glossing urban realism with glamour in the objectified sexualisation of its female stars and chorus line, the sensational Gaiety Girls (Bailey 1998a, 1998b; Booth 1991).

As yet music hall and theatre held their own against the rival attraction of film and cinema though competition intensified. The moving picture made its debut in a film in London's Alhambra music hall in 1896, soon incorporated as a regular item on the halls everywhere. Shown in shop fronts, fairgrounds and town halls early film duplicated the variety formula of the halls in short items of comedy, stunts, news and travel, giving way to the longer narrative form of classical film from 1908 with as yet little American product. The first purpose-built cinema in the country opened in Colne, Lancashire. By 1914 there were 3,000–4,000 cinemas in Britain, a sizeable fraction in converted music halls, as 'the pictures' secured a mass, predominantly working-class audience. The average leisure budget of male youths in Birmingham in 1913 was reportedly one music hall, one football and two cinema attendances per week (Chanan 1996).

Football – soccer – also commanded a mass following while cross cut with diverse and competing loyalties. Big new stadiums were built, financed through incorporation, non-speculative social capitalism rather than big business. With professionalism legalized and a national league in place, Saturday afternoon at the match became a sacrosanct secular ritual for working-class males manifesting a partisan territorialism inimical to the game's original arbiters. The victory of working-class Blackburn Olympic over the public school Old Etonians in the FA cup final in 1883 was a victory for tribalism over chivalry, North over South, the professional over the amateur game. Rugby football remained a minority, predominantly middle-class game with significant exceptions. In industrial south Wales it was played and supported by immigrant working-class communities, a passionate expression of a newly forged Welshness. In Scotland, soccer was the engine of a similarly intense working-class identity, fragmented by sectarianism, reaffirmed in common hostility to the English. In Ireland nationalists promoted the distinctly indigenous games of hurling and Gaelic football in resistance to British cultural hegemony. In all of these various arenas the common element was a gender exclusive, intensive male bonding. Women were mostly strangers to the games cult, though a handful of new public schools for middle-class girls pioneered sports for women (Holt 1989; Lowerson 1993).

The new model sports were a prominent feature of widespread cultural imperialism. In the territorial empire of subject peoples, principally India, sport reinforced the necessary qualities of leadership among the governing administration, with the selective admission of an indigenous elite to absorb the civilizing values of their rulers. In the mostly white settler colonies, there was a wider dissemination and take up. Across the empire at large cricket, despite its own snobberies, proved the most popular of exported games, credited by a star contemporary as 'amongst the most powerful links which keep our Empire together' (Mangan 1986: 105). As the technology and practice of Britain's industrial revolution spread to a wider world its artisans and managers took their favourite sports with them, most notably soccer. By the 1890s football clubs founded by expatriate Englishmen were generating extensive local participation and support in industrializing cities across Europe and South America, their workers inspired by the complementary model of 'la semaine Anglaise' to agitate for its guaranteed allotment of free time (Walvin 1994). Homeland culture from Shakespeare to operetta to music hall comics

followed the flag as theatrical touring companies plied well established trade and export routes to play across the English-speaking world.

At home seaside visits were a well established feature of the new leisure. By 1911 half the population were making daytrips to the coast with another 20 per cent booking longer stays. Resorts were differentiated by class. The leading resort, Blackpool, doubling in size in the 1890s, catered primarily to the working classes of northern manufacturing towns; Southport next door was a more exclusively genteel resort. The seaside appealed for its fresh air – ozone was a Victorian discovery – bathing and relaxation, but increasingly for its sights and entertainments. Opened in 1894, Blackpool Tower (modelled on the Eiffel Tower) surmounted a circus, aquarium and a vast and resplendent ballroom. Blackpool, a major venue on the music hall circuit, boasted a large amusement park with the latest rides, and the longest bar in the world. Together with ‘naughty’ postcards and fish and chips it was the epitome of the newly traditional working-class good time. The middle class pursued more family centred pleasures with a growing emphasis on serving the children (Walton 1983).

The aristocracy enjoyed a late Victorian efflorescence as the archetype leisure class. Despite diminishing incomes, their conspicuous consumption amply confirmed Veblen’s classic pronouncement on leisure’s crucial function in the reinforcement of status. The aristocracy set the tone in the select world of society, an elite formation with the judicious admission of new wealth. Spring and summer were given over to the highly formalized pleasures of the London Season, racing at Ascot, rowing at Henley, yachting at Cowes, subjects of avid press interest (Cannadine 1990; Davidoff 1986). Country house parties occupied the rest of the year, accompanied by the exclusive sports of hunting, shooting and game fishing. A new rural gentry resumed the role of patrons of the people’s reformed sports and feasts as the maypole made a sanitized comeback, though country people were eager customers of the cheap theatres and music halls of the towns (Cunningham 1990; Horn 1999).

The fin de siècle stage, as later the screen, reflected a more heterosocial world with women a more numerous visible public presence, both in image and actuality. Women stars and chorines were the glamorized icons of poster art and the new picture postcard, while young women workers were increasingly on show staffing the new bars, teashops, stores and offices, enjoying the independence bestowed by the ‘white blouse’ revolution in jobs and earnings. Middle-class women enjoyed a day out in town, combining shopping at the new department stores, a matinee at the theatre and lunch or tea at a wide choice of respectable refreshment stops. By night, women were a numerous element in the leisure crowd, respectable or otherwise, adding to the possibility of romance and sexual adventure in the liminal zones of the big city. One report noted ‘Strange Women abroad, neither ladies nor common, respectable women copying the dress and manners of “unfortunates” for mere excitement; but they don’t want gentlemen to go too far’ (Bailey 1998a: 173). ‘Unfortunates’ denoted prostitutes, by far the most numerous of leisure professionals, working the streets and more fashionable venues. In a major controversy in 1894 the National Vigilance Association attacked the Empire music hall in Leicester Square for fostering high-class prostitution. A further sensation of the 1890s was embodied in the bold figure of the New Woman who, reported

H. G. Wells, ‘rode a bicycle, played tennis or golf, showed six inches of stocking beneath her skirts, and loosened her corsets’ (Rappaport 2000).

The ‘safety’ bicycle of the 1890s was enthusiastically adopted as the new vehicle of personal freedom and mobility. Advertising extolled its liberating potential as an escape from the infernal city to the spiritually cleansing glories of the countryside. Though mainly the preserve of men, the bicycle was particularly liberating for women in its requirement of more ‘rational’ dress and escape from supervision, as young women out-bicycled their chaperones and parents.

The debate on leisure now urged its greater fulfillment, matching material progress with cultural enrichment. Thus a higher order of capitalism might realize Matthew Arnold’s intellectual and artistic ideal of ‘the best that has been thought and said’. Promoted as a legitimate and desirable bonus was the long suspect element of overt pleasure. Avant garde writer Grant Allen, endorsed by Oscar Wilde, proclaimed ‘The New Hedonism’, a sexualised inversion of conventional morality. ‘Be virtuous and you will be happy’ was rewritten as ‘Be happy and you will be virtuous’. Reacting against Victorian high-mindedness, the Edwardian literati exalted ‘fun’ as an instinctive capacity for joy and playfulness, urged as antidote to the tensions of an overheated modern civilization. The socialists (and earnest cyclists) of the *Clarion* movement sought the integration of politics and leisure through ‘the revolutionary use of joyfulness’, while the newly lauded fun became a prominent trope of leisure entrepreneurs and their public, combining self-evident entitlement, suggestions of sexual mischief and a rebuke to society’s killjoys – ‘Why shouldn’t we have some fun?’ ‘Light’ and ‘bright’ were other keywords in the rhetoric of leisure advertising and commodification, part of an emerging middle-brow aesthetic (Waters 1990; Bailey 2007).

Yet the modern crowd also provoked alarm in early stirrings of the mass culture critique. The crowd at play was previously feared as a threat to property and the social order; the new spectatorate, allegedly both passive and over-stimulated, manic and sedated, was abhorred as a sign of physical and mental degeneration, a threat to racial survival and national efficiency. Denouncing it as ‘drivel for the dregs’, journalist W. T. Stead charged music hall with responsibility for Boer War defeats. Liberal politician Charles Masterman attacked the suburban lower middle classes for their susceptibility to ‘the huge ignorance of the music hall and the yellow newspaper’. He expressed deep political unease at the ‘the new civilization of the Crowd’ represented by football fans, ‘that congestion of grey, small people with their facile excitements inflamed by artificial interest’. Philosopher Herbert Spencer called football ‘the rebarbarisation of society’ (Bailey 1987: 152).

Closer scrutiny suggests a general improvement in the conduct of the leisure public. For all the clamorous excitement of football crowds, fights and unruliness were exceptional. For all their continuing exuberance music hall audiences had become house trained, as were the largely self-regulating assemblies of the modern museum and exhibition. Middle-class respectables could be unnerved by rowdy working-class day trippers crashing the barriers of segregated holiday zones, but ‘the beast’ that still exploded on Derby Day and similar occasions was more effectively quarantined in a society answering to a nexus of modern rules and disciplines, from railway timetables to the state schoolroom. Even so, the reform offensive continued.

Football became a new medium for gambling, a national passion that rivalled intemperance as the main target of reformers. The severely prohibitive Street Betting Act of 1906 aimed at the working classes met with massive evasion, outwitting the local constable a recreation in itself. Still a major constituent of the proletarian good time, alcohol became more of a social lubricant than a total experience in itself. The per capita consumption of beer and spirits declined from the 1870s, due less to temperance pressure than the growing availability of competing alternatives in leisure consumables – soft drinks, ice cream, fish and chips, cigarettes – treats for women and children as well as men (Fraser 1981). And there was tea, ‘the cup that cheers but not inebriates’.

Tea and the teashop were leading features of mass commercial catering, providing routine refuelling for commuters and a more leisurely amenity for sociability and eating out. The teashop derived from the initiatives of rational recreation, made more efficient, less patronizing and more hospitable. The leading national chain, Joseph Lyons, operated 98 teashops in London alone by 1910, offering affordable ‘light’ refreshments in handsome Continental-style premises served by young, trained, ‘correctly shaped’ uniformed waitresses. Under his slogan ‘Free Trade in Pleasure’, Joe Lyons held catering and entertainment contracts at Earl’s Court Olympia, opened in 1887 as London’s first permanent exhibition ground, collaborating with the international showman Imre Kiralfy in mounting the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. The largest held in Britain since the Great Exhibition of 1851, the ‘Franco’ added to its artistic and trade exhibits with a large amusement park, Fun City.

Yet much of Victorian leisure remained domestic, small scale and relatively un-commercialised. Cheap sheet music and pianos in one in nine households by 1900 encouraged home music making. Animal raising, carpentry and gardening were absorbing hobbies for better off working-class men. Visited by German bands and barrel organs, the back streets were still playgrounds for working-class kids, sites of neighbourhood gossip and sociability for housewives. Working-class youth took over the main streets on Sunday nights for ‘monkey parades’, romantic skirmishes between the sexes. Occupying the middle ground of civil society between the public and the private, a wide array of voluntary associations served small-scale communities of interest, from middle-class golf clubs to the many social cells of the still flourishing pub (McKibbin 1991).

In many ways Victorian leisure was a transplant of modern industrial production and a fertile technology. Its reformers sought to impose a play discipline similar to that of the factory, their moral severity marginally relieved by philanthropy. In a rogue branch of capitalism, leisure entrepreneurs played more to the needs and appetite of its citified subjects, encouraging pleasure while plausibly respectable and operationally rational. The liberal state and its officers policed, adjudicated and licensed. Within these parameters the public exercised an increasing degree of choice among widening opportunities. Historians have done much to reconstruct the formation and content of Victorian leisure, but assessing its impact is as problematical as it was for contemporaries. Seen through a wider political lens as a contest between forces of conformity and resistance in a conflicted class society, one interpretation maintains that a hegemonic capitalist leisure machine reduced workers to political impotence, relegated from ‘perhaps the most distinguished

popular culture England has known' to a compensatory 'culture of consolation' orchestrated by the music hall as the new opiate of the masses (Jones 1983; Thompson 1968). For others the halls operated within a wider network of recreational ties that strengthened working-class self-confidence, particularly among young males, building support for the emerging Labour Party (Childs 1992; Kift 1996). More conclusively, leisure reinforced middle-class identity as a major site of collective bonding and bounding, a source of cultural capital and aspirant gentrification guarded against the vulgarity and sham gentility of those below. Yet while class remained a powerful determinant of leisure choice and practise, collectively prescribed forms were divided among class fractions and subcultures, haute and petit bourgeois, rough and respectable workers, yielding overall to a more plastic, modern field of self-expression (Lowerson 1993; Cunningham 1990). To a degree, Victorian leisure had become democratized, 'a sort of neutral ground we may fairly call our own' (Bailey 1987: 82).

The increased provision and enjoyment of leisure dispels the repressive stereotype with which the Victorians have been charged. It was as much a tool for living as a tool of social control, suggesting a significant enhancement of the quality of life. Yet leisure ideals were variously compromised and disappointed. Dickens' Dulborough was a social and cultural wasteland, and the deadness of the English Sunday appalled Continental visitors. Large numbers of the poor still had neither time nor money for commercial pleasures. With some exceptions, women were particularly disadvantaged in terms of time and resources (Davies 1992). Even for the well advantaged, old inhibitions remained. Observing the palsied progress of a middle-class dinner party, Trollope concluded the pursuit of leisure in England was as laborious, affected and dull as foreigners made it out to be; John Maynard Keynes's father once smoked a cigar and found it such a pleasure that he never did so again. Editorialising on 'Modern Amusements', *The Times* grumbled at 'continually increasing demands upon our time, our money, and not least, upon our strength and powers of endurance'. In the new railway age there was an increasing preoccupation with time budgeting and the coordination of people and services, imparting 'a sort of mechanical style in our joys'. An associated anxiety in Eliot's critique of new leisure was its 'periodicity', an incessant demand for attention fracturing the rewards of leisurely contemplation into mere distractions (Bailey 1987).

Then too, consumers got much less even as they got much more. A proactive capitalist leisure industry worked to secure continuous consumption in a popular culture still haunted by the historic pattern of feast or famine, a fitful pattern of scarcity punctuated by episodes of prodigality. In selling its (twice) nightly entertainments, music hall vaunted its pleasures as a feast, eliding the appeal to traditional associations of licence, abundance and the carnivalesque with modern norms of orderly and measured consumption. Here was a sensationalized but carefully managed exercise of simultaneous stimulation and containment that heightened expectations but flattened out rewards. Not that pleasure and other satisfactions were thereby extinguished, but they answered to a changing modern emotional economy whose configurations and significance belong to the poetics as much as the politics of the Victorian leisure world, a further problem of leisure, one yet to be fully explored.

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PART VI

VARIETIES OF
VICTORIANISM



CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

INDIA IN THE VICTORIAN AGE

Victorian India?



Margrit Pernau

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

On 1 January 1877 Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. The event was grandiosely orchestrated on the plains north of the old city of Delhi, the former capital of the Mughal emperors and was attended by at least 84,000 people, most prominent among them the Indian princes and chiefs with their retinues, colorfully decked in precious clothes and jewels. In what he imagined to be the language of oriental symbolism, the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, staged the feudal order of India – the traditional rulers, the princes and the landlords, the ‘natural leaders’ commanding the allegiance of the people, joyfully paying obedience to their suzerain. It was British rule, embodied in the supremacy of the empress, so the message went, that created order out of the unbounded diversity of the multiple Indian communities, allocating each of them their proper place. As required by the childlike nature of the peoples they governed, this order was displayed through a riot of symbols appealing to all the senses, through the carefully graded gun salutes for the princes, through the protocol governing distance and proximity to the Viceroy, the gifts of perfume and betel leaves, and the resounding titles awarded (von Hirschhausen 2009).

When Lord Lytton celebrated the success of this venture as demonstrating the love of the Indians for their Queen–Empress, and concluded that India, unlike Britain, was still a safe haven for traditional values, he not only conveniently forgot about the acerbic criticism the imperial assemblage had raised in the Indian press – taking place, as it did, against one of the severest famines the country had known for many decades. As Bernard Cohn has shown in his masterpiece on ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’ the language and the symbols he employed, for all their oriental garbing, told much more about the British imagination of India than about Indian perceptions (Cohn 1987). The fact that Victoria was Queen–Empress of India, that she ruled over the teeming multitudes was not only highly important for the way she saw herself, but also for what the Victorian age meant for Britain. Not that either the assumption of the title of empress or imperialism as a whole had ever gone unchallenged. But the very debate on what it meant to belong to a nation held to constitute the apex of civilization, what rights and duties, what

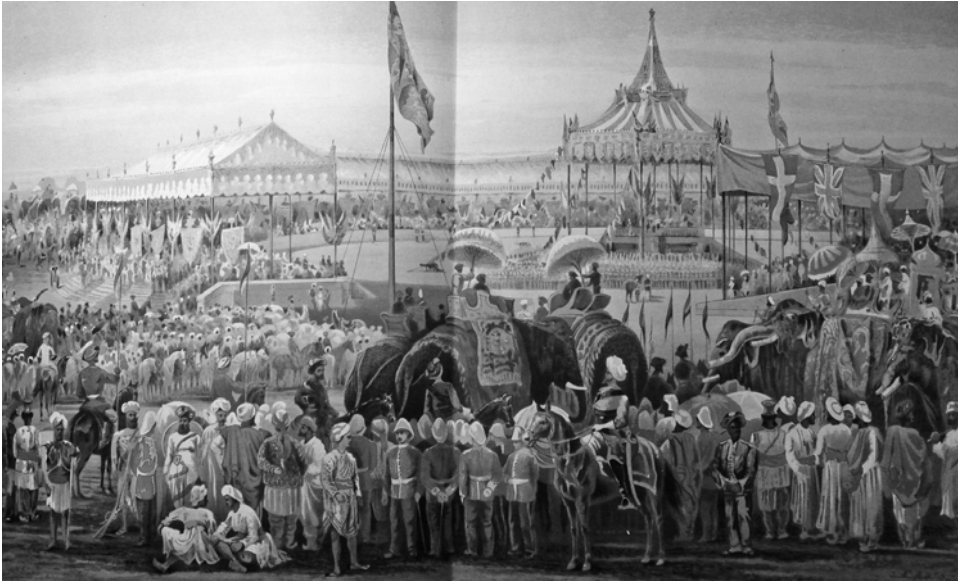


Figure 36.1 J. T. Wheeler (1877) *The history of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi, held on 1 January 1877 to celebrate the assumption of the title of empress of India by Her Majesty the Queen . . . Including historical sketches of India and her princes past and present.* London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer

dangers this implied, was central to the self-understanding of the Victorians. India, the brightest jewel in the crown, was not only ruled by the British crown, but contributed decisively to its creation, both materially and symbolically (Cannadine 2001).

What does this tell us about the appropriateness or not of labeling India during the Victorian age, i.e. roughly from the 1830s to the 1890s, ‘Victorian’? Do the dates of reign of a far-away ruler, who only became Queen of India in 1858, constitute a meaningful epoch in Indian history? And does this epoch bear some resemblance to what is characterized as Victorian in the British context?

On face value, one could argue that the Queen–Empress was central to the perception of colonial rule in India. The events of 1877 stood out by their pomp and grandeur, but they were by no means unique. Victoria’s proclamation in 1858 had marked the end of the cruel retributions after the rebellion; it had guaranteed their rights to the princes and non-interference in religion and traditional customs of the people. It therefore was hailed as the Magna Carta of the Indian princes and was quoted over and over again as a proof of the newly found British understanding of authentic Indian values, a proof the clash between the greedy and interfering East India Company and villainous and treacherous Indians had been healed in the new alliance between the Queen and the nobility. Victoria was the symbol of this new order, displayed in the statues of her in every Indian town, in her pictures, hanging in every town hall and classroom.

This symbol of the Queen-Empress and the plethora of smaller symbols that went with it, however, hid more than they revealed. From a sign for power they had turned into its substitute. The crowns had become hollow – behind the facade of feudalism, new social forces had formed and were pushing forward (Dirks 1987). If the Victorian age in India makes sense as an epoch, this chapter will argue in a first part, it would be the age of the unequal alliance between the newly forming middle classes and the colonial power. It was their worldview, drawing on the interaction with the Victorians under the conditions of colonial rule, but translating them into indigenous idioms, which provided the coherence to this period – this will be the argument of the second part.

THE COLONIAL STATE AND THE MIDDLE CLASSES

More than half a century ago, John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson pointed out that the British Empire was based not only on the direct exercise of power, be it military, economic, or administrative, but also encompassed territories that were governed through alliances (Gallagher and Robinson 1953). This blurring of the difference between direct and indirect rule – direct rule, too, could not survive without allies, and indirect rule's allies were always aware of the colonial power's option to use more direct means – placed the changing terms of collaboration at the center of attention (Robinson 1986).

The era of conquest of the Indian subcontinent lasted roughly from the 1750s to the 1820s, in the northwest until the late 1840s. The East India Company was increasingly drawn into military action to protect its commercial interests, not least from the French. The allies it needed were those able to wield armed battalions – the rulers of the successor states to the Mughal Empire, the many smaller Nawabs and Rajas and even powerful landlords, whose command of some detachment of horses could be decisive for a battle. In order to successfully manage this system of alliances, the British made a conscious effort to integrate into the late Mughal political system. This allowed them not only the access to sources of information vital for political and military decisions, it also kept the costs of influence low – both in monetary terms and in terms of avoiding resistance. The 'White Mughals', those British residents at the royal courts of Hyderabad, Pune, or Delhi, who culturally adapted to the indigenous elites, spoke their language, wore their dresses, and loved their women (Dalrymple 2002), therefore were a sign less of the multicultural inclination of the early colonial rulers, than of a transitory period, in which British power was not yet secure.

However, the wars were costly and cut into the trade profits of the East India Company's shareholders. Part of the costs could be recovered through enforced subsidies from the allies, but more and more it was land revenue from the settled territories that was supposed to finance colonial rule. This in turn increased the importance of administration. While the 'White Mughals' had been happy to leave the bulk of the administrative work to their allies, reserving for themselves only the most important and symbolic decisions, their successors' 'rule by records' went much deeper (Saumarez Smith 1996). Again, knowledge was crucial, but it was a different kind of knowledge from the earlier information on intended political

moves of important actors. What was sought for now was knowledge on the land and its products, on village administration and rules of inheritance, on castes, tribes, and peoples, on languages and customs. It was the time of the first geographical surveys, the first regional census, and gazetteers – witness to the new passion for mapping and counting of ever-increasing details (Bayly 1996; Edney 1999). This development was not limited to the colonies, but found its counterpart in the new concepts on administration simultaneously developed in Britain. Nor was it a concept of knowledge that was created in a metropolis in splendid isolation from its empire – the new bureaucratic state, which needed new forms of supervision, was itself to a large extent (though not exclusively) the product of the colonial situation and the encounters it initiated (Joyce 2003).

This transformation of the colonial state did not take place at the same time all over the subcontinent. While the British had taken over the revenue administration of Bengal in 1765, the conquest of the Punjab ended only in 1849. Everywhere, though, the assumption of direct rule brought forth the need for a new set of allies – no longer men able to wield the sword, but experts of the pen, who knew about administration, about finances and about trade. On the British side, this change in allies was matched by the rise of a new generation of colonial administrators, who set out to distinguish themselves from the ‘White Mughals’ and what they perceived as their corruption and their adaption to Indian culture and values. Their background training had given them a new cultural self-confidence; their liberal and evangelical leanings convinced them that it was both possible and their duty to introduce change in India. Education, the promotion of Western knowledge in the place of patronage for the classical languages, the spreading of English language and literature and of Christianity were the new goals – the creation of Macaulay’s often quoted ‘brown Englishmen’ (Macaulay 1835). On the British side as well, the new emphasis on the distinction between the believer and the heathen, between rationality and superstition and between righteous rulers and oriental despots provided the background foil against which the new national character could be imagined.

Who were the men who now thronged the newly founded English colleges in India? Most of them hailed from either scribal or merchant communities looking back on a long association with state administration. The influence of these groups had already begun to increase before the advent of the colonial power, but was tremendously boosted by the new functions the state was taking up and the openings thus available to them. The alliance offered to them was certainly unequal, but not without providing them some advantages and at least initially the means of also pursuing their own agenda (Pernau 2006).

Thus in the 1830s, roughly at the time of Victoria’s ascension to the throne, the first period of turbulent transfigurations brought about by colonial rule had ended in a new balance. As conquest gave way to an ever-expanding colonial state, the coalition between the ‘White Mughals’ and the old ruling classes had been replaced with alliance between British civil administrators and the Indian rising middle classes. It was this alliance that was to mark the character of the Victorian Age in India (Joshi 2001, 2010).

This argument of the historical unity of the period from the 1830s to the 1890s, framed by two periods of transformation (the 1780s to the 1830s and the 1890s

to the First World War) questions the traditional reading of the revolt of 1857 as the central event dividing the nineteenth century into two clearly distinguished halves. Already in 1864 John Kaye held forth that it was the civilizing mission of both the liberals and the evangelicals, their misplaced belief that the same rules held true for the West and the East, their ruthless interference in native customs and religions that had pushed the Indians to rebellion, thereby summing up the conservative interpretation of the revolt (Kaye 1864). If Britain wanted to keep India, he concluded, it had to govern the country in accordance with principles understood by their subjects and renounce social and political transformations. This was the backdrop to Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, referred to above. This, later historians have argued, led to the most fundamental break in British policy during the nineteenth century, to a return to the alliance with the 'natural leaders' of the people and the end of the belief in universalism and a civilizing mission (Robinson 2000a).

The revolt of 1857 was certainly a traumatic experience for both the British and the Indians, notably the Muslims among them. On the British side, countless autobiographies, letter collections, novels, and history books kept the memory alive, re-enacting ever again the foundational stories of Indian treason and cruelty and British valor and chivalry, of danger heroically overcome. These publications, which ran into several hundred titles, were crucial to the British self-imagination as an imperial nation in the second half of the nineteenth century (Chakravarty 2005). The Indian reactions were more muted – not least because in the aftermath of 1857, the expression of sympathy with the rebels could easily lead to the loss of life and property. The recollection of the brutality of British repression reinforced the feeling of colonial supremacy and Indian helplessness. If the country were to regain a place of pride among the nations, this could only come about by learning from the West.

Deep though the breach went, it did not transform the nature of the state. While the police and army continued to provide an only thinly veiled backdrop for colonial power (Arnold 1986), rule continued to be by records. If anything, the thirst for knowledge increased after 1857, as did the penetration of society by the state – needing more, not fewer, administrators and strengthening the alliance with the middle classes. Arguments that the Oriental nature of the Indian people called for a style of government in alliance with traditional forces, for a strong paternalism not hampered by liberal ideas of rule of law and participation, were always matched by opposing arguments about the necessity of good government and of civilizational progress, which could only be provided by the British. Either argument, when pushed too far, would lead to a destabilization of colonial rule – if the Indian princes, on their own, provided a government better suited to the genius of the people, the British lost the legitimation for their ongoing presence on the subcontinent; if on the other hand, their legitimation was based only on the claim of effectively teaching Indians the way to reform and progress, they risked boosting Indian claims to participation and rendering themselves superfluous in the near future (Metcalf 1994).

This held true even for those territories that were called the 'Indian India', the over 500 states that were still under a variety of indigenous rulers – classical instances of indirect rule by alliance. As the staging of the imperial proclamation

has shown, these rulers were supposed to embody the authentic Orient, with jewels shrouded in legend, with unfathomable intrigues and impenetrable harems, autocrats wavering between despotic cruelty and generosity recalling the Arabian Nights. It is here that the discourse on the alliance with the natural leaders found its most colorful expression. But this did not imply the British renouncing a tight control of the states' administration. The imperative of good government always balanced the Oriental fantasies and provided the rationale for any intervention deemed necessary. Nor did the states, at least the larger among them, renounce bureaucratization and administrative reform, thereby hoping to consolidate their finances and strengthen their position vis-à-vis the colonial power. Even the most jewel-bedecked prince ruled by the pen and no longer by the sword (Ramusack 2004; Ikegama and Major 2009).

THE ARGUMENTATIVE MIDDLE CLASSES

Historiography has long regarded the Indian middle classes, both in their existence and in their culture as a creation of the colonial state. Victorian values and life-worlds were developed in Britain, so the argument went, and then exported to India. The Indians adopted them, either because they admired the superior British culture – the position of the traditional historiography – or because the colonial power did not leave them a choice – the thesis of ‘dominance without hegemony’, held by the early Subaltern Studies Group (Guha 1998). A visit to most of the associations where the pressing issues of the day were debated would tend to confirm this opinion: the paraphernalia of electing presidents and secretaries, of lectures and discussions, of record keeping and membership fees, of publishing annual reports, but also of topics brought forth and arguments used would have looked like results of the civilizing mission or like mimicry to any visiting Victorian gentleman, depending on his own political inclinations.

More recent research has challenged these assumptions in two respects. First: the division of labor between historians of the colonial period and the pre-colonial has tended to obscure lines of continuity. Though the colonial state certainly had a significant impact both on the rise of the middle classes and also on their values, this impact was less of a creation than of a transformation of developments that were already under way – the advent of the British certainly did not constitute a point zero in Indian history. Second: the alliance between the colonial state and the middle classes was a very unequal alliance, but this did not imply that the Indian side had no means of negotiating the British values and translating them into their own political and cultural idiom.

This holds true for the two central institutions, which constituted the framework for the discussion of middle-class identity and middle-class values, print culture and the associations, who were at the same time very Victorian and very much indebted to the Indian traditions. Though the first printing in Indian languages was done by Christian missionaries, the adoption of the new technology by Indians led neither to a rapid change of the texts that were circulated – even under conditions of print capitalism what sold best were books on religion or poetry – nor the design of the books nor even the manner in which the texts were produced (Blackburn 2003; Stark 2007; Naregal 2002). The same holds true for the early

printed newspapers, which were much less a product of British patronage than was long assumed. Instead, they drew heavily on pre-colonial information regimes based on manuscript newsletters and on oral communication, providing them with a larger audience and drawing new groups into the traditional network of shared news (Pernau and Jafferey 2009).

The associations, which at first glance had seemed so indebted to the British model, covered a wide array of concerns. Among them could be found the classical institutions of liberal civil society, agencies of self-government at a local and community level, philanthropic organizations, and debating clubs (Sharma 2000; Watts 2005). The same framework, however, was also used for very different purposes, as shown by the many caste associations, which spread mainly among the merchant communities and those groups from which the colonial bureaucracy recruited their employees. By advocating and enforcing religious and social reform among the members of the caste, ranging from avoiding excessive spending on weddings and dowries to the propagation of female education, rising middle-class groups certainly conformed to a standard the colonial officers could identify with. At the same time their aim was to increase the internal cohesion of the caste community, often drawing together several sub-castes, and to raise its social status with regard to other groups. They were at the same time among the most successful propagators of what looked like Victorian values and also, through the same activities, some of those who re-enforced caste society in a new way (Roy 2010; Leonard 1978; Stark 2007: 110–16).

If the very fact of sustained exchange of arguments by the middle classes, taking place within the framework of print culture and associations was a sign of the Victorian character of the epoch – a Victorian character that was neither British nor Indian, but a result of the cultural encounter under colonial circumstances – this holds true even more for the topics that were debated and the arguments brought forth.

EDUCATION AND CIVILIZATION

As argued above, the expansion of the colonial state needed an ever-increasing number of administrators to man the lower and middle rungs of the bureaucracy. This was reflected in the curricula of the newly founded colleges since the 1830s – geography and mathematics, above all geometry, provided the skills needed for surveyors and revenue administrators; English and the vernaculars were needed for scribes; anatomy and medicine, taught at the medical college in Calcutta, trained assistants for British doctors (Kumar 1998). This education, which led to jobs, was quickly taken up by the middle classes. Unlike the schools that focused on traditional knowledge, within a short time span these colleges were able to attract a sufficient number of students without offering grants.

But education was never reduced to every-day practical considerations only. Under the influence of the evangelicals, the debate on the aims of the East India Company, which accompanied the renewal of its charter in 1813, had marked the end of an epoch, one in which the economic success of colonial rule and the dividends it brought the Company's shareholders were considered sufficient justification – in India and even more so in Britain. Power, the argument now went,

brought with it responsibility, not only for the bodies of the subjects, but also for their souls. While the wisdom of direct support for missionaries remained contested throughout the nineteenth century, as it was held to endanger the stability of the government, education was viewed as its substitute. Even without direct religious instruction, the curricula of the colleges were held to further Christianity: instruction in natural sciences was to undermine native superstitions, inculcate the habit of rational thinking and thus prepare the mind for Christianity. At the same time the teaching of English literature, which was introduced in India much earlier than in Britain, served to open the minds of the students to British values and form their character (Viswanathan 1989; Bhattacharaya 2005; Seth 2007).

Societies, the British enlightenment thinkers had claimed, were characterized by their level of civilization, moving at an unequal pace from early stages of savagery and barbarity to ever higher planes. Civilized nations, so the argument went, were distinguished from the barbarians not only by their economic and scientific development, by their inventions and their ability to build bridges and railways. These were but the exterior results of their inner being, most of all of their values and virtues, their ability to take endless pain to achieve their goals, to forgo the instant gratification of their desires and to submit to order and planning. However it was not only their mastery of emotions that marked the British self-image as the most civilized nation. It was matched by the tender feelings towards the weaker sections of society, by charity and chivalry, by loyalty and trust among equals. British though this concept might be, once again it already bore the traces of the colonial encounter since the eighteenth century.

While the creation of difference along the lines of civilization built up a hierarchical order, it implied a message of hope, since this order was not immovable. Rather, nations could move up, and education and self-education were the foremost means of this move. Imbibing Western knowledge and English literature, the Indian middle classes trusted the liberal promise would not only get them jobs, but make them the equals of the colonial officers and finally end colonial rule.

Education and civilization could thus be regarded not only as a common project. It also seemed to translate easily into vernacular concepts, postulating an underlying universality. Positing equality between two concepts through the act of translation, however, changed these very concepts in both the languages. As an example: in the North Indian Urdu–Persian language community, civilization was translated into *tahzib ul akhlaq*, the refinement of the habits, a key concept in the Persian debate on morality since medieval times. Basically linked to courtly culture, it implied the idea of a natural state of unbounded passions and uncouth rawness, which had to be polished and refined in order to make common life possible and turn social interaction into a work of art. Though self-education was central to this process, it could only reach its goal within a society whose cosmological order was held up by holy men and saintly rulers. It was this reference to the embedding of the concept in a cosmological order that got lost through the equation with civilization. As a translation of the English concept, the refinement of the manners and habits was no longer thought of as brought about by kings and saints, but by the interaction of citizens meeting in associations and clubs. At the same time, even for the middle classes, it never completely lost its semantic mooring in court culture. Even at its most Victorian, *tahzib* retained a reference to polished manners, to

elaborate rituals of courtesy and to an understanding and patronage of the arts – it remained a virtue not so much of the citizen, but of the respectable classes of society, and these connotations in Urdu and Persian reflected back on the use of the English expression by the same actors (Pernau in press).

REFORM AND PROGRESS

The diagnoses of political and social ills as well as the belief that these ills did not have to be suffered passively, but could be remedied by carefully planned reforms, constituted a core area of public debates of the Victorian era in Britain. For all their differences, both liberals and evangelicals agreed that this applied to India not less but more than to Britain itself, and that the introduction of reforms constituted the historical mission of the colonial power. For a long time historians, even those critical of colonialism, went along with this argument, looking at the abolition of widow immolation and slavery, the prohibition of certain religious rituals, like hook swinging and the dedication of young girls to temples, and the introduction of medical reforms, like the mass campaigns against cholera and plague, as the redeeming factors of colonialism.

Recent historiography has challenged this interpretation on two accounts, first by showing that the British did not bring the idea of reform to India, but rather reinforced a movement that had been on its way at least since the middle of the eighteenth century (Rizvi 1980; Bayly 2000), and second that this alliance between Indian and British reformers was by no means as unequivocally beneficial to women and the weaker sections of society as was for a long time claimed (Mani 1999; Arnold 1993).

If the evangelicals regarded Indian religions, as they observed them in the nineteenth century, as debased by superstitions, so had the Hindu and Muslim reformers already before the advent of the British. The present, they argued, was corrupted by superstition, by debased customs and rituals. This however was not inherent to the religion itself. Rather than conversion to Christianity, the answer lay in discarding the living traditions and returning to the pristine purity of the origins as laid down in the sacred texts. The resemblance of this move to protestant reformation has encouraged it to be read as influenced by the colonizers' religious ideas, but especially for the Muslims, this topic of a period renewal (*tajdid*), made necessary by man's natural inclination to move away from the true revelation as time went by, had a long history. The movement started by Shah Wali Ullah (1703–62), which deeply marked all the reformist movements in the nineteenth century and beyond, aimed at an all-encompassing renewal of Muslim life, now held to constitute the responsibility of every single Muslim. It was he, who in the absence of a responsible Muslim ruler, was to guarantee the Islamic character of society by his behavior. This involved spreading knowledge not only to scholars, but to all – hence investing in translating the scriptures into the vernacular, into print culture, and most of all, into female education, eradicating the dangerous stronghold of superstition from within the house and family and safeguarding the upbringing of the next generation according to scriptural standards (Robinson 2000b; Jalal 2000).

For the Hindus, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) has been read as the first prominent public figure responding to the British challenge and promoting reforms in every walk of life, from religion, where he advocated a return to Brahmanic principles and to monotheism, to the promotion of a critical public sphere by editing several of the earliest printed newspapers in the vernacular, to social reform, where he was at the forefront of the debate in favor of the banning of sati, widow immolation, arguing that it had no scriptural basis in ancient Hindu texts. This turned him into a powerful symbol of the Bengali renaissance as well as of the alliance between the middle classes and the colonial power (Hatcher 2008).

Both for Hindus and for Muslims, women became one of the most important, if not the most important, site on which the debates on tradition and reform took place. Women embodied the community; their place in society and their behavior were the canvas on which the true character of the indigenous religions, scriptures, and values would be painted (Minault 1998). This meshed with the British notion that it was the status accorded to women, which was the true indication of a society's stage of development. The discussion of who was willing, able, and allowed to protect Indian women thus was also a debate on India's place among civilized nations (Spivak 1988).

This gain in symbolic importance of women was paid for by an ever-closer monitoring of their conduct, which increasingly had to be modeled on scriptural norms. The more women were talked about by men, the more they had to be silenced (Sangari and Vaid 1989). Women's reform and women's education thus were much more ambivalent than apparent at first sight. At least in immediate effect, they led to the re-enforcement of patriarchal control, an aim that both for the colonial power and the middle classes went well with the idea of social reform (Singha 1996). In the long run however, the effects of education proved difficult to control. The ability to read, which had been intended to make women more pious and better mothers, opened new ideas and possibilities to them, which they pursued, sometimes in alliance with the men in their families, sometimes without their knowledge or even against them (Walsh 2004; Chakravarti 1998; Sarkar 1999).

THE NATION AND ITS HISTORY

Closely linked both to the debate on civilization and on the possibility of effecting reform was the discussion on whether India had a tradition of history writing, whether it was possible to recover its history from the existing sources, and what marked this history. The pageantry at the Imperial Assemblage, symbolizing an 'Eternal India', might have evoked romantic longings for a long-lost world among some, a counter-image to the rapid changes and the dreariness of the industrial age. Politically, however, this 'eternity' placed India outside of history. In the eyes of the contemporaries, this implied a location outside development and progress, the sites where power was to be gained, and also outside the claim to nationhood, as it was only the memory of a shared past that could create political unity out of diversity. Both agency and unity, the preconditions for being a nation, and even more for being a self-governing nation, were thus conditional of having a history – an idea that linked up strongly with British (and more generally European)

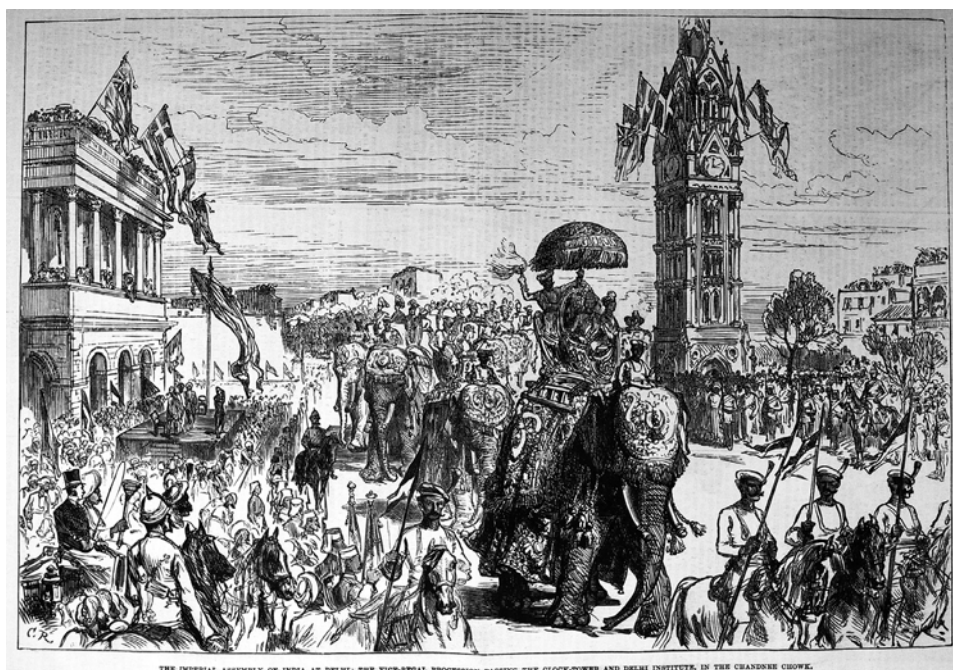


Figure 36.2 The Imperial Assembly of India at Delhi: the Viceregal Procession passing the Clock Tower and Delhi Institute in the Chandnee Chowk, *Illustrated London News*, 27 January 1877

notions on nationhood and nationalism since the eighteenth century (Colley 1992; Barczewski 2000; Collini *et al.* 2000; Jann 1985; Melman 2006; Parker 2000; Forbes 1952). To be reassured about its future destiny, the nation needed a history.

History writing therefore was loaded with meaning and anxiety: ‘Bengal must have her own history. Otherwise there is no hope for Bengal’, the poet Bankim-chandra Chatterjee exclaimed in 1880 (Guha 1988: 1). At this point in time, it still mattered less whether it was Bengal which was the nation or India, as long as there was a nation embedded in history (Kaviraj 1992). Historiography had to prove the existence of the golden age, which the reformers hailed, and show that the present stage of powerlessness and degradation, as perceived by the British and their middle-class allies, was not an essential character of the Indian nation, but rather a development brought about by external forces and hence reversible. It also had to refute the British argument that India had never been a nation and that it was the colonial power that had gifted the country with a unity it had never been able to bring forth through its own efforts. History therefore had to develop from an account involving only rulers and ruling groups to a narrative involving the people as the subject of the nation (Chakrabarty 1992; Chatterjee 1993, 1999; Ali 1999; Lal 2003).

Writing the history of the nation also implied a decision about who belonged and who did not – with most important political implications for the present. This was the same question that was also faced by British historiography: if Britain was

a Protestant and an Anglo-Saxon nation, what did this imply for those who belonged to neither of these categories? In India, the central question to resolve was the position of the Muslims in history: were the successive dynasties, which had settled in India since the twelfth-century invaders, responsible for ending the golden age and bringing the development of the nation to a halt and thus the cause of the degeneration the writers observed in the present? Was Mughal rule to be depicted as a part of Indian history with which readers could identify, of which they should feel proud, or was it a period of oppression, a rule by foreigners? The question of who was a foreigner, however, could not be solved unequivocally without raising a host of problems. If the fact that the Muslims had come from beyond the borders of India – in the same move constituting these borders as trans-historically given – marked all of them as outsiders, irrespective of the time they had settled in India, the same question could be, and was, asked by the Dravidians in South India with regard to the status of the Aryans (Trautmann 1997). Making religion, not immigration at some point in history, the criterion of belonging, thus claiming India as the land of the Hindus and the Hindus only, was hardly less divisive for a multi-religious society. These questions were not only passionately debated in historiography, they also formed the backdrop of the many literary efforts to recreate a past, by which present day readers and listeners would be moved to action (Kaviraj 1995; Dalmia 1997; Shackle and Majeed 1998).

Both the idea of effecting reform by drawing on a golden age and the attempt to create national unity through history thus hid a disruptive power for the communal fabric of India. The very figure of a golden age, which was not shared by all those who lived together in the present, but predated their historical encounter, contributed to the creation of homogeneous religious communities of ‘Hindus’ and ‘Muslims’ while at the same time delegitimizing any accommodation that had taken place at a later stage.

THE END OF THE ALLIANCE

The alliance between the Indian middle classes and the colonial state had formed in a first period of transformation, differing from region to region, but coming to an end in most parts by the 1830s; its dissolution started in the 1890s and ended in the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi after the First World War. While it is easy to find sources, notably in English, proving the extent to which the middle classes had bought into colonial rule – not only submitting to the realities of power, but also admiring and adapting to their rulers’ culture – these sources have to be read against other texts, mostly in the vernacular, often ironic in mode, which not only harshly criticized the British, but also made fun of the middle classes for their submission. The fact that it was often the same authors who admired and ridiculed their own admiration, added an extra layer of ambiguity to the irony (Russell 1992; Kaviraj 2000).¹ So even while the alliance lasted, the Indian middle classes were perhaps not so much ‘crushed by English poetry’ (Chandra 1992: 17) (or under the influence of British hegemonic culture) as they were exercising political agency. At the same time, this agency could only work within the framework of unequal power relations; the middle classes were very

well aware of their subaltern position. Still they held that their aims of reforming Indian society, invigorating the nation, and thus regaining a place of pride among the civilized countries, could be reached in alliance with the British, or at least with the liberals among them, and by learning from the West.

It was this faith that was being slowly eroded. While figures like Ram Mohan Roy had canvassed British support for his reform agenda, his late nineteenth-century successors forewent an alliance that gave the colonial power the possibility to interfere in the private sphere of their subjects. Rather, the colonization of the public sphere, the space in which middle-class men had to contend with their powerlessness as subaltern peons in the administration, had to be matched by an uncontaminated private sphere. Here, women were no longer the symbol of backwardness and superstition, but of the power of unchanging Indian cultural values (Chatterjee 1993: 116–58). The regeneration of India as a nation now depended on keeping this space out of the colonial power's influence. If it needed reforms, these reforms were no one's concern but the Indians' themselves, who would take care of these issues once national freedom had been secured and the danger of a British intervention precluded.

However, the abandoning of the universalism that had formed the intellectual basis for the alliance in favor of cultural relativism and even a strong cultural nationalism was once again more ambivalent than apparent at first sight. Since the late eighteenth century the British had described the colonial relation in gendered terms, the male Occident being opposed to a feminine, even effeminate Orient. The Indian middle class throughout the nineteenth century had not only attempted to refute this charge, but also turned it into the starting point for a whole program for the reacquisition of masculine vigor. While this strand remained influential at least until independence, it was increasingly matched by another interpretation, which also took up the idea of a feminine India, but turned this femininity into its source of strength. It was not the male and materialistic West that would be able to save the world, late nineteenth century reformers like Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) held, but a feminine and spiritual India, a message that was not only received by the world parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893, but also propagated in the West by the Theosophist Society (Basu 2002). However, it was only with Gandhi that this rejection of alliance with the British and, to a lesser extent, of the Western model became the mainstream national movement (Mehta 2010).

How far then is it possible to talk of a Victorian age in India, as a category that does not just reproduce colonial categories, but takes into account the specificities of the colony without denying the powerful impact of the colonial situation? This chapter has argued for a basic unity of the phase between the 1830s and the 1890s, corresponding roughly to the Victorian age in Britain, and marked by an alliance between the Indian middle classes and the colonial state. Rather than Victorianism being formed in Britain in a first instance and then exported to the colonies, it is the encounter – political and cultural – between the two that gives its identity to the period (Ghosh and Kennedy 2006). Indian Victorianism had to negotiate this encounter (as had British). Though the keywords through which the middle class argued – civilization, education, reform, and nation –

sounded most familiar to British Victorians, all of them had a pre-colonial history. This vernacular heritage, linguistic as well as intellectual, continued to weave through and inflect the new layers of meaning added by the colonial encounter (Liu 1995; Gluck and Lowenhaupt Tsing 2009). Indian and British Victorianism thus were neither identical, nor could they ever be conceived without each other. If Victorianism was a colonial category, it was a colonial category that marked colonizer and colonized in the same movement.

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NOTE

- I See also the project on 'Colonial Satire in Modern South Asian Languages', led by Hans Harder at the South Asia Institute Heidelberg (www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/b-public-spheres/b1.html), accessed 7 December 2011).

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

VICTORIANISM
AT THE FRONTIER
The white settler colonies

—♦—
Margot Finn

INTRODUCTION

The history of Britain's white settler colonies at once reflects and refutes the dominant developments and motifs of metropolitan Victorian society. The place names, institutions and personnel of colonial Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa all tapped common roots of identity planted firmly in British soil. In letters, landscapes, newspapers, novels, travelogues and pageantry, settlers in these emerging polities repeatedly affirmed their enduring ties to fondly remembered, hopefully imagined and craftily concocted British homelands. No less conspicuous, however, in white settler histories were colonists' repeated departures from British practices and precedents. Overwhelmingly agrarian in a period during which Britain itself became predominantly urban, Victorian settler societies also departed from metropolitan norms in their political constitutions, ethnic compositions and legal regimes. Vociferous in demanding democratic and economic rights from the imperial government, moreover, white settlers were tenacious in defending their British 'birthrights' from the competing claims of aboriginal inhabitants in their adopted homelands. 'Settlers occupied a strategic, curious, and contested place within the conduits of power that constituted the British World', Adele Perry has commented, underlining the extent to which settler self-government and 'the lived practice of rule' fragmented colonial identities. 'Settlers thus occupied what we might call a doubled place within the Empire: they experienced being colonized and colonizing in simultaneous and seemingly contradictory ways' (Perry 2005: 159).

Place names readily convey the Janus-faced character of Victorian settler society, capturing both colonists' persistent desire to replicate metropolitan models of civilisation and the insistent refusal of local cultures and terrains to conform to these colonial agendas. Fort Victoria, British Columbia (established in 1846), Australia's Colony of Victoria (established in 1851) and Cape Town's Victoria and Alfred waterfront (so-named for the ceremonial role played by the Queen's second son when the harbour's construction began in 1860) were among the hundreds of Victorian Victorias that served to mark distant territories emphatically as British, loyal and subject. On New Zealand's South Island, the naming of Dunedin (derived

from the Scottish Gaelic words for Edinburgh and founded by the Free Church of Scotland in 1848) likewise registered the ease with which Celtic identities could be subsumed within this imperial cartography in Victorian settler societies. Other place names, however, traced distinctly ‘other’ colonial trajectories. Near Dunedin, Murderers Bay and Murdering Beach memorialise violent nineteenth-century encounters between Maoris and Pakeha (white) settlers on the Otago coast. Under-scoring the fundamental incompatibility of colonial and indigenous conceptions of ‘home’ in New Zealand, these examples gesture to the wider complexities of imperial notions of the domestic in the Victorian era (for which, see Hall and Rose 2006: 1–31). In the Australian colonies, the nomenclature of encounter between settlers and aborigines was similarly often fraught and decidedly unsettling, as the designations of Murderers Hole, New South Wales and several Murderers Hills (two located in Tasmania and three in Victoria) attest. Nor were relations between Britons in the Australian settlements consistently harmonious. Norfolk Island’s Bloody Bridge – built by the forced labour of Victorian convicts – provides a powerful reminder that civilising imperatives could exact disproportionate contributions from subordinate whites as well as from aboriginal populations in settler societies.

The men and women who presided over the establishment of the white settler colonies were drawn from an expansive governing class linked by shared networks of patronage, marriage and communication (Laidlaw 2005). Throughout the nineteenth century, this administrative elite overlapped at key points with the ruling classes of Britain’s ‘black’ colonies in India and the Caribbean (Lambert and Lester 2006, Bickers 2010). James Ramsay, first marquess of Dalhousie (1812–60), whose tenure as governor general of India (1847–56) saw the annexation of the Punjab, had spent his childhood in Canada, where his father served as governor-in-chief of British North America before becoming commander-in-chief of the Indian Army (Lee-Warner 1904). In the closing years of the Victorian period, the fourth earl of Minto (1845–1914), heir to a long family tradition of imperial service on the subcontinent, acted as governor general of Canada (1898–1904); he later held office as viceroy of India (1905–10) (Miller 1980). At the lower levels of colonial management, slippage between white and non-white colonial experiences was likewise common. Caroline Chisholm (1808–77), who spearheaded reforms of Australian emigration systems in the early Victorian years and founded the Family Colonisation Society in 1849, was the wife of an East India Company army officer. First inspired to embrace colonial reform projects by the plight of British soldiers’ daughters in Madras, Chisholm travelled with her husband on sick leave to Australia, and upon his return to active duty orchestrated her reform campaigns from a base in New South Wales, before returning home to Britain with her family (Mackenzie 1852).

Notwithstanding the persistence of these cross-cutting imperial ties within colonial careers, the Victorian era saw the emergence of increasingly salient distinctions between the white colonies of settlement and the wider British Empire. To be sure, contemporaries continued to insist upon the unifying reach of English mores and the English ‘race’ beyond these boundaries. When Charles Dilke ‘followed England round the world’ in 1866–67, his travels suggested to him that America, Canada, Australia and India ‘must form a Greater Britain’, for across these far-flung territories

the English ‘race was always one’ (Dilke 1868, I: vii, viii). But his experiences on the subcontinent repeatedly defeated Dilke’s efforts to weave India seamlessly together with the white colonies of settlement. Whereas America, Australia and New Zealand continually reminded Dilke of England and Englishness, in contemplating India he was forced to acknowledge that ‘England in the East is not the England that we know’ (ibid., II: 374). Anthony Trollope, who documented his extensive journeys through the settler world in successive travelogues from 1862 to 1878, grudgingly included the Cape among England’s colonies, but emphatically excluded India from colonial status. To Trollope, the settler colonies were ‘countries outside our own, which by our energies we have made fit for the occupation of our multiplying race’. Judged by this criterion, India was a possession, but ‘in no respect a colony’, while Canada, Australia and New Zealand ‘have been and are colonies in every sense’ (Trollope 1873, I: 2).¹

As the nineteenth century advanced, the imperial lexicon increasingly registered the settler colonies’ distinctive status. James Belich discerns a new tendency on the part of British observers, from the 1820s onward, to distinguish between ‘emigrants’, on the one hand, and ‘settlers’ or ‘colonists’, on the other. ‘An emigrant joined someone else’s society, a settler or colonist remade his own’, he asserts, finding in this emerging distinction the demographic roots of the rise of an ‘Anglo-world’ centred in the settler colonies of Canada and Australasia (Belich 2005: 53). The Victorian years saw Parliament grant responsible government to successive settler colonies, a development that gave institutional form to this new conception of ‘an empire of settlement’. As John Manning Ward concludes: ‘The new aspect was confident expectation of a great imperial destiny, in which the colonies of settlement would be extensions of Britain overseas, peopled from the British Isles, reproducing vital parts of British polity and society, developed with British capital, under some British control (economic as well as political), and sharing in British culture, civilisation, law and government (Ward 1976: 356). Increasingly, the career trajectories traced by imperial administrators reflected the distinctiveness of the white colonies of settlement. Key figures in the emergence of ‘systematic’ colonisation in the Victorian period, such as Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796–1862) and Sir George Grey (1812–98), thus shuttled among Australia, Canada, the Cape and New Zealand rather than between the white settler colonies and India (Garnett 1898, Bloomfield 1961, Rutherford 1961).

Although Belich’s conception of an ‘Angloworld’ is not unproblematic, it provides a useful optic for exploring the English and British identities of Victorian white settler colonies. To what extent did the interlinked societies of the Angloworld constitute a successful transplantation of British practices and institutions? In what follows, I focus on three aspects of Victorian settler societies that afford vantage points for assessing these colonies’ replication of (or departure from) British norms: law, labour and democratic cultures.

LAW ON THE FRONTIER

Pluralism was a hallmark of the Victorian legal order in Britain and its settler colonies. Scottish law and English law derived from (and adhered to) distinctive legal traditions; the English legal landscape itself encompassed a welter of

contradictory principals and jurisdictions, comprising conflicting equitable and common law courts in which judgments were meted out variously by lay magistrates and legal professionals (Finn 2006). Transplanted to the settler colonies, metropolitan legal cultures became yet more variegated. Encounters with aboriginal populations challenged English understandings of property and labour; conflicts between free and bonded settlers raised fundamental questions about the nature and extent of presumed English birthrights; the elaboration of informal, 'low' legal cultures and customs by settlers distant from British control generated antagonism when these new systems of law came into contact with the formal, 'high' legal cultures of British officialdom (Karsten 2002). As Lauren Benton has observed, 'Colonies were not distinctive because they contained plural legal orders but because struggles within them made the structure of the plural legal order more explicit' (Benton 2002: 9).

Metropolitan observers habitually downplayed the divergence of settler law from English law, for the existence of a shared legal tradition was integral to British conceptions of the settler societies as integral components of a shared British homeland. Charles Dilke forcefully articulated this conviction in 1868. 'In America, the peoples of the world are being fused together, but they are run into an English mould: Alfred's laws and Chaucer's tongue are theirs whether they would or no', he opined (Dilke 1868, I: vii). Settlers participated actively in the construction of this invented legal tradition, making strategic (and highly selective) use of this line of argument to argue that their 'English' birthrights invariably followed them abroad. Efforts by emancipists (convicts who had completed their terms of penal servitude) in New South Wales to win full access to jury trials illustrate both the plurality of 'English' law in settler settings and the success with which subordinate white colonists deployed conceptions of English birthright to wrest power from colonial and metropolitan governing elites. Whereas settlers in British North America had enjoyed the right to jury trials since 1792, military panels were initially deemed essential for maintaining the rule of law in Antipodean penal settlements (Murray 2006: 70–71). Gradually extended to exclusives (settlers who had emigrated to the colony of their own volition) in the 1820s, the right to trial by jury became a touchstone of emancipist ambition as the size and influence of the ex-convict population increased. Claims that the denial of trial by jury was 'contrary to all our habits, feelings and opinions as Englishmen' underpinned a vociferous emancipist petitioning campaign that had forced the metropolitan government to concede even former convicts full rights to trial by jury by 1839 (Neal 1991: 167–87, citation 167).

The dual identity of settlers as objects and agents of colonisation is nowhere more evident than in the land law. Historians have drawn attention to the parallels between parliamentary statutes that drove impoverished Britons to the white settler colonies, on the one hand, and the statutes enacted by and for white colonists that stripped aboriginal populations of their livelihoods, on the other. The enclosure and clearance of 'waste' in England, Scotland and Wales thus propelled emigration to settler societies by closing down customary access to land in Britain, only to see these settlers in turn deny territorial rights to aboriginal inhabitants who had failed to mark their 'waste' lands with fences, buildings and stock (Karsten 2002: 116–17). Declared *terra nullius* (no man's land) by Britain upon first settlement, Australia

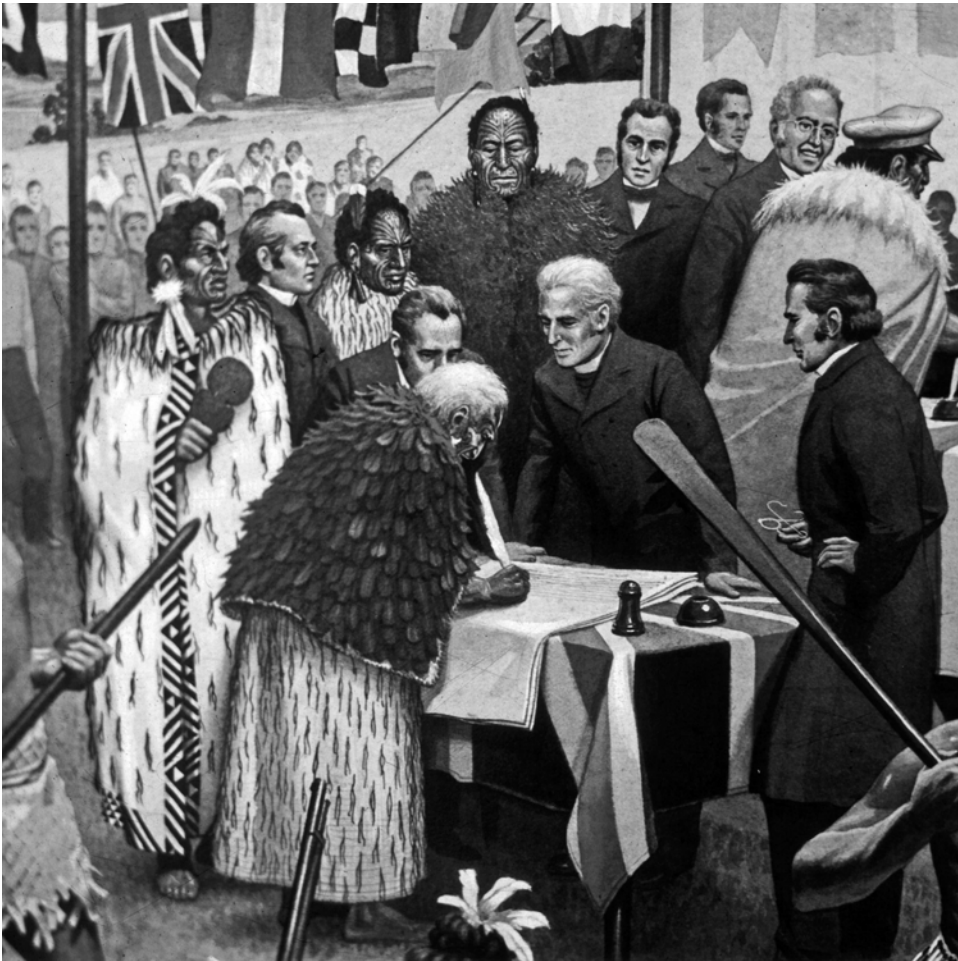


Figure 37.1 The Treaty of Waitangi: Maori chiefs recognise British sovereignty and New Zealand becomes part of the British Empire. This was designed to guarantee land rights to the Maoris and give them British citizenship. Mary Evans Picture Library/Hubertus Kanus

afforded an extreme but telling instance of this broader phenomenon. Hunger for land united the exclusives and emancipists in the face of their mutual hostility. So avid were these settlers to ‘unlock the land’ that even women’s right to real property came to be acknowledged: years before the wider principle of coverture was overturned in Britain or Australia, canny Victorian colonists determined to increase their families’ landholdings had come to manipulate conveyancing reforms to bring settler wives within the pale of colonial land law (Golder and Kirby 2001).² In sharp contrast to settler wives’ precocious access to land, aborigines were repeatedly depicted as outside property relations, relegated to an archaic temporal frontier and cast as interlopers within the settlers’ domain (Macneil 2001). Commenting on aborigine-settler relations to the land and its resources in 1870s Victoria, an observer underlined the analogy between the

survival tactics of indigenous Australians and the British men whose crimes had consigned them to a new life in the colonies:

He goes out in his canoe in the night and uses torches to attract the fish, exactly after the manner of the poachers of the North Tyne in England, who in their trows, and with lights burning . . . robbed that river of its salmon.

(Smith 1878: xxxii)

The broad pattern underlying settler land rights was expropriation, a trend that was to accelerate in the era of responsible government. But if colonial expansion consistently led to the loss of indigenous land rights in Victorian settler societies, the routes by which this common destination was reached displayed significant variations. Although New Zealand's first settlers were initially ruled as a political dependency of the colony of New South Wales, the infamous Treaty of Waitangi (6 February 1840), by which Britain assumed sovereignty over Maori lands, offers a series of contrasts to the doctrine of *terra nullius*. Lieutenant Governor Hobson's 21 May 1840 proclamations, establishing Crown rule in New Zealand, depended for their legitimacy on interpreting the Treaty of Waitangi as a treaty of cession. From the outset, this was a problematic claim. In its first article, Maori signatories conceded 'kāwanatanga' (or 'governance') to Queen Victoria, a concession translated – more than robustly – as 'sovereignty' in the Treaty's English-language version (Brookfield 1989: 4). Fundamentally dependent upon incompatible texts in which 'the words chosen to translate crucial terms in the Treaty are not equivalent, either because they mean something else, or because the Maori words are more general and less precisely defined than the English' (Biggs 1989: 310), this effort to establish settler sovereignty on firm foundations was further destabilised by the pluralistic legal cultures of the Anglo world. The status of native title in post-Waitangi New Zealand was first tested in *Regina v. Symonds* (1847). Here the presiding justices chose to follow precedents set not in English courts but rather in the Supreme Court of the United States. In doing so, they acknowledged aboriginal legal title – albeit title limited by the Crown's newly asserted sovereignty on New Zealand soil. Rejected however throughout the 1840s by Colonial Office policy, this imperial common law jurisprudence was subverted both by the Crown's desire for fiscal restraint (colonial government on the cheap) and by white settlers' demands for land (Hickford 2010). After decades of contestation, Chief Justice Prendergast, relying upon positivist legal reasoning rather than the common law tradition, denied the legality of aboriginal title emphatically in *Wi Parata v. Bishop of Wellington* (1877), declaring the Treaty of Waitangi 'a simple nullity' (Hackshaw 1989: 92–93).

Although high court decisions such as *Wi Parata v. Bishop of Wellington* were vital components of the legal regimes in white colonies of settlement, day-to-day justice in the Victorian colonies – as at home in Britain – rested instead in the magistrates' courts. As settler populations expanded and colonial frontiers increasingly became sites of conflict with indigenous peoples, magisterial justice emerged in the official mind as an instrument not only for disciplining but also for civilising unruly subaltern peoples. During his governorship at the Cape (1847–52), Sir Henry Smith (1787–1860) thus sought to co-opt Xhosa chiefs into the British state's imperial apparatus by incorporating them as salaried magistrates of the Crown. In theory, the system of law Smith established when British Kaffraria was created in 1847

displayed a neat division of labour between Xhosa chiefs and British resident magistrates: the former were to administer Xhosa customary law, and the latter to adjudicate ‘serious’ crimes—*theft, witchcraft and murder* (Price 2008: 205–10). Having served as a resident magistrate in Western Australia prior to his successive appointments as Governor of South Australia (1841–45), New Zealand (1845–53) and the Cape Colony (1854–61), Smith’s successor, Sir Charles Grey, was likewise convinced that distancing so-called savages from custom and tribalism demanded their participation in (or subjection to) British legal practices and cultures (Belich 2008). Yet as Richard Price has argued, frontier conditions in Victorian South Africa repeatedly undermined British confidence in the ability of magisterial law to control the non-white populations that threatened burgeoning white settlements. As the Xhosa came to be constructed by British officials and missionaries as outside rational reasoning, they also figured increasingly as beyond the control of magisterial authority. Martial law, not civil law, was to be their ultimate fate. In the aftermath of the catastrophic, millenarian Xhosa cattle killing of 1856–57, ‘The British legal system was trundled into play to scoop up most of the prominent chiefs in the province, try them, convict them, and sentence them to varying terms on Robben Island’ (Price 2008: 316).

LABOUR

If law provided an essential institutional chassis for Victorian settler society, labour supplied this mechanism’s driving force, consolidating colonial centres of authority while driving the frontiers of settlement ever outward. At home in Britain, the problem of surplus labour was a chronic matter of concern: Malthus’s grim calculus of demographic excess inspired belief in the necessity of market disciplines, animated party debates and played a foundational role in the emergence of Britain’s trade union movement. In the white settler colonies peopled by these surplus Britons, however, labour shortages were far more common than an excess of supply to demand (Belich 2009: 30). Within colonial Victorian labour markets, shortages of workers often served to distance the experience of labour in settler societies from British norms, either by subjecting subaltern populations (such as convicts and indigenes) to unusually onerous conditions of work or by endowing scarce free labourers with unusually generous negotiating powers. In the political sphere, debates over the appropriate forms of labour in settler societies emerged as a key flashpoint in settlers’ contentious relations with the Colonial Office: as colonists began to articulate distinctive and self-conscious identities, antagonism to white convict labour combined in settler discourse with a fondness for coercive master and servant legislation designed to control (and perhaps to civilise) black workers. In the realms of culture and ideology, labour figured centrally in British understandings of settler society. Anthony Trollope, visiting Kimberley’s booming diamond mines in the 1870s, discerned in wage labour the means by which Africans could be brought within the British fold. Here, he asserted, ‘a settled Kafir population . . . will fall gradually into civilized ways of life . . . put off his savagery and live after the manner of his white brethren’ (Trollope 1878, II: 186). Full entry into this brotherhood of man, however, was to await his conversion to the labour process. Until that day, it was for Trollope a settled ‘fact . . . that the white man has to be master and the black man servant’ (ibid., I: 8).

Trollope's *South Africa* reflected later Victorian verities that could emerge only after settler society at the Cape and in Australia had grappled successfully with the threat and legacy of white British society's convict stain. The transportation of 160,000 convicted criminals from Britain, Canada and Ireland to New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and Western Australia between 1788 and 1868 marked Antipodean society at once as a site of depraved disorder and as a laboratory for new coercive labour regimes (Damousi 1997, Kercher 2003). Sharp increases in the number of persons transported in the 1830s, the increased pace of free and assisted white emigration to Australia and British penal reformers' rising confidence in the penitentiary system all worked to highlight the problems posed by convict labour at the start of the Victorian era. To be sure, efforts to leaven the punitive aspects of convict labour with reformatory regimes were a conspicuous component of British colonial policy in this period. First at the helm of the Convict Probation System in Van Diemen's Land (1840–42) and then as colonial secretary at the Cape (1843–52), John Montagu, for example, developed a system of chain-gang labour designed to 'rescue the delinquent from the power of vicious habits or degrading propensities, and to restore him to society' (Montagu Report of 1849, cited in Penn 2008: 475). But although Montagu's reforming career importantly underlines the close links that bound penal policy in the colonial Cape and Australia, sentiment in white settler society turned decisively against convict labour in the Victorian period.

The abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1834 rendered white bonded labour increasingly incongruous in the Angloworld, precipitating a succession of vocal public campaigns that saw settlers from the Cape and Australia join forces against the Colonial Office. Transportation to New South Wales had been suspended in 1840, placing pressure on the British government to locate new outlets for Britain's convict population. In 1848, Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ordered the resumption of transportation to New South Wales and its introduction at the Cape, provoking a sustained and vitriolic reaction from settlers in these colonies. Deploying the rhetoric of the anti-slavery movement to discredit forced labour and playing upon the putative threat to settler domestic life posed by exposure to sexually promiscuous convict servants, colonists in Sydney and Cape Town erupted in press and petitioning campaigns designed to assert their identities as white, bourgeois and British (McKenzie 2003, 2005). Unable to impose its will on the recalcitrant settlers of New South Wales and the Cape, the British government also ended transportation to Van Diemen's Land in 1853, laying groundwork for that colony's reincarnation in 1856 as Tasmania. Respectability, hitherto the hallmark of Victorian middle-class culture in the metropole, had now also come to be at home in the empire.

From the 1850s onward, as settlers' self-fashioning not only as proponents but also as exemplars of 'free' labour gained purchase, racial lines emerged with new salience in colonial labour markets. At mid century, petitions against Earl Grey's proposal to send convicts to the Cape had claimed that the presence of British felons in the colony would undermine the virtuous example set for black labourers by white settlers (McKenzie 2003: para. 40), but the combined impact of the mineral revolution (unleashed by the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1870) and rising racial consciousness had largely put paid to such lines of argument by

the century's end. 'By 1902, ethnic solidarities that ... cut across class divisions tended to be of greater significance than they had been in 1875', Vivian Bickford-Smith observes. By the 1880s, he concludes, 'the majority of Cape Town's dominant class, assertively "English" and imbued with the class consciousness of their counterparts in Britain, came to see the question of controlling and explaining the city's lower classes in ethnic and racist terms', sympathising 'with poor Whites while blaming Black poverty on Black inferiority' (Bickford-Smith 1995: 9, 211).

Increasingly, the ways in which endemic labour shortages played out in settler colonies assumed racial configurations. Peter Karsten's survey of white labourers' relations with employers in New Zealand, Australia and Canada concludes that, in the post-convict era, 'employees appeared to have been treated quite even-handedly everywhere by magistrates' in labour disputes (Karsten 2002: 360). Changes in master and servant legislation throughout the Anglo world worked to buttress white labourers' bargaining position, but simultaneously undercut the position of black workers in colonial labour markets. In Britain, 1875 saw trade union leaders achieve passage of the Employers and Workmen Act (37 & 38 Vict. c. 80), at long last achieving liberation from master and servant sanctions that had subjected workers to the criminal law for their breaches of contract – meting out penalties that included imprisonment and corporal punishment – while making employers at worst liable to suffer the sanction of civil damages for their lapses. Already largely held in abeyance in colonial New Zealand, master and servant legislation was rapidly repealed in Canada in the aftermath of the British Employers and Workmen's Act: already in 1877, a Canadian Breaches of Contract Act had removed the criminal penalties that had hitherto constrained workers' freedom in the market (Herring 2007, Webber 1995). This trend within the world of white settler labour contrasted sharply with the predominant thrust of master and servant legislation in colonies with significant black labouring populations. Here freedom from slavery and incorporation into new white settler economies brought subjection to new colonial master and servant acts even as British workers in the metropole escaped from such constraints. Thus far from fading with the Victorian era, punitive criminal sanctions and harsh regimes of corporal punishment emerged as the discipline of choice when white settlers in Kenya (which enacted master and servant legislation in 1906) sought to bring their African labour force into the 'modern' market (Anderson 2000; more broadly, see Ahuja 2007, Craven and Hay 1995, Hay and Craven 2004).

DEMOCRATIC CULTURES?

Debates over labour contributed toward the wider evolution of democratic cultures within the white colonies of settlement in the Victorian years. Although the relative speed with which Victorian settlers acquired new democratic rights offered a sharp contrast to the leisurely pace of political developments in Britain, democracy in 'Greater Britain's' colonial outposts was strongly shaped by enduring currents of metropolitan loyalism. Monarchy provided an essential unifying ideology as colonial settlers began to flex their political muscles and question the wisdom of Westminster's political institutions. Despite her conspicuous preference for her Indian empire and relative lack of enthusiasm for the white colonies of settlement,

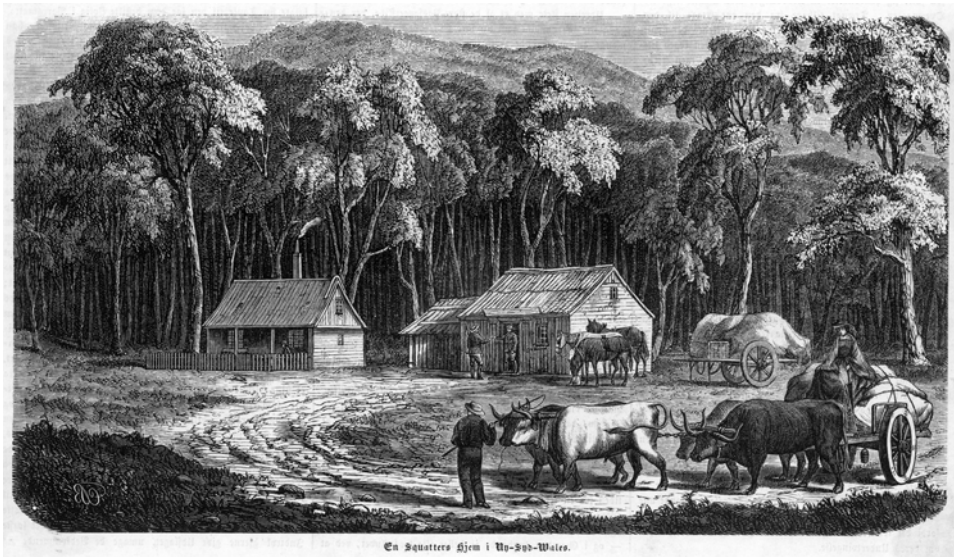


Figure 37.2 A settler's home in a woodland clearing in New South Wales. (1863)
Mary Evans Picture Library

Queen Victoria increasingly emerged as ‘a central element in the iconographic order of Greater Britain, her name alone exerting a “magic force”, her image linked by musical and visual rituals of national identification to the idea of freedom itself’ (Bell 2006: 10). Republican tendencies were thus conventionally muted within settlers’ democratic movements. Even Charles Dilke’s notorious republicanism was, Miles Taylor argues, focused far less on the evils of monarchy per se than upon the broader need to limit arbitrary political power within an emergent Greater Britain (Taylor 2000). In this respect, both Victoria and Victorianism were central to the configuration of the white colonies of settlement.

Against this backdrop of over-arching loyalism, political conceptions borrowed from liberal and radical traditions in Britain played essential roles in the emergence of settler democracy from mid century. Paul Pickering, tracing the lineaments of Australian settlers’ mounting opposition to Britain’s use of their colonies as dumping grounds for convicts, thus locates the ideological roots of this agitation in Britain’s anti-slavery movement, Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law campaign, forms of ‘popular constitutionalism’ that ‘provided a uniquely British beginning for Australia’s democratic experiment’. Occurring against a backdrop in which calls for responsible government were becoming audible throughout the Anglo world, Pickering observes: ‘Opposition to convict transportation became a metaphor for the demand of greater local independence and refined the relationship of the Australian colonies to Britain’ (Pickering 2005: 98, 97).

Rapid strides toward parliamentary democracy were indeed a hallmark of white settler colonies in the mid-Victorian years, which saw appointed legislative councils give way to representative and then responsible governments in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Cape. Canada was first to enter the fray of self-rule: Nova

Scotia gained responsible government in 1848, the Province of Canada in 1849, Prince Edward Island in 1851, New Brunswick in 1854 and Newfoundland in 1855. Australasian observers, explicitly drawing the British government's attention to the precedents set by this 'Canadian system' (Ward 1976: 299), agitated successfully for responsible governments from the 1850s, achieving their goals in New South Wales and Victoria in 1855 and South Australia and Tasmania in 1856. New Zealand enjoyed responsible government from 1856, as did the Cape Colony from 1872. But democracy in these British colonies was also a case of one step forward, two steps back. 'Historians have not infrequently imbued the white settler sprint towards responsible and then democratic government with a decidedly triumphal hue', Grimshaw, Reynolds and Swain have observed. 'And yet, within this triumph of settler democracy, as barriers of birth, wealth, property and gender fell away, indigenous peoples' rights were increasingly circumscribed' (Grimshaw, Reynolds and Swain 2001: 88).

The antinomies of white settler democracy provide a fitting conclusion to this survey, for they encapsulate many of the key tensions – between tradition and modernity, metropolitan and colonial cultures, white and black populations – that marked the imperial Anglo world more widely in the Victorian era. Debates over suffrage illustrate these tensions with particular force. A central irony of the settler world was that the convict colonies to which Chartist militants had been consigned to penal servitude were themselves to win manhood suffrage decades before British men at home gained this fundamental right. Responsible government gave colonial legislatures the right to establish their own voting qualifications, and Australians in the longest-established colonies responded by 'noisily asserting their democratic credentials' and moving 'with alacrity to manhood suffrage' (Evans, Grimshaw and Phillips 2003: 69). Introduced in South Australia in 1856, Victoria in 1857 and New South Wales in 1858, manhood suffrage proved, however, more problematic in settlements where substantial non-white populations threatened to swamp the settler vote. In Queensland and Western Australia, as in New Zealand, the Cape and Canada, the density of indigenous populations slowed and complicated the introduction of manhood suffrage. The rights of Maori inhabitants to participate in government served as a bulwark against manhood suffrage for years after the passage of the New Zealand Constitution Act of 1856. Reluctantly incorporating four Maori representatives (elected by Maori men of 21 years of age or over) into the legislature from 1868, New Zealand democrats found to their shock that, voting together, even a small bloc of indigenous representatives could hold the balance of power and even topple governments (*ibid.*, 80–81). In Canada, anxious white settler populations resorted to a range of expedients to exclude indigenous peoples from the franchise: in Nova Scotia and British Columbia, settlers claimed that their own virtual representation of indigenes obviated their need to vote, while in Ontario the provisions of the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 created 'status Indians' who, unlike 'Canadian citizens' would stand outside the democratic pale until they abandoned their Indian ways (Grimshaw, Reynolds and Swain 2001: 82). At the Cape, property qualifications served to prohibit most Africans from voting, but observers such as Trollope worried that the bar had been set too low to preserve settler supremacy in the face of Africans' increasing conversion to wage labour (Trollope 1878, I: 91–92).

Viewed from this perspective, the relative ease with which white women were welcomed into the democratic process in settler societies speaks as much to colonists' racial fears as to settler societies' democratic impulses. In the 1860s, Charles Dilke was sceptical of the ability of women to contribute to settler liberal democracy. 'There is at present in Victoria and New South Wales a general admission among the men of the existence of equality of conditions, together with a perpetual rebellion on the part of their wives to defeat democracy, and to re-introduce the old "colonial-court" society, and resulting class decisions', he concluded (Dilke 1868, II: 57). In the following decades, colonial men themselves, in contrast, increasingly came to see their wives as vital allies in the struggle for settler supremacy. The extension of the franchise to women in New Zealand (1893), South Australia (1894) and Western Australia (1899) was a product not only of feminist suffragist campaigns but also of 'a fear of people of colour' (Evans, Grimshaw and Phillips 2003: 141).

In his 1873 travelogue of *Australia and New Zealand*, Anthony Trollope argued that labour regimes, not democratic institutions, lay at the heart of Britain's relations with its colonies. 'As our colonies are chiefly serviceable to us and to the world as offering fields in which labour may make men prosperous and happy, it is essential that something should be known on this matter', he opined. 'After all, democratic institutions, form of government, ballot, responsible ministers, and the like, are but flea-bites on the great body of the people' (Trollope 1873, I: 164). The argument made here is rather different. The 'flea-bites' of democracy in Victorian settler society shared broad characteristics with both the colonial world of labour and the legal regimes by which that world was regulated. Modern in key aspects when compared to metropolitan practice and archaic in others, settler society in the Anglo world was a tissue of inner contradictions. British identities were not reflected, but rather refracted through a glass darkly, in the Victorian white colonies of settlement.

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NOTES

- 1 Like Dilke, Trollope considered the United States to be 'in the most proper sense, a British colony' (Trollope 1871). For his inclusion of South Africa in the colonial fold, see Trollope 1878. For his colonial travels, see Hall 1998.
- 2 This is not to suggest that disparities of power between white settler women and aboriginal peoples were consistent, either within or between colonies (see Bradbury 2005, esp. 148).

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

AFRO-VICTORIAN WORLDS

—♦—
Simon Gikandi

When C. L. R. James, the distinguished Caribbean intellectual, reflected on the world in which he had grown up and come of age – colonial Trinidad at the beginning of the twentieth century – he saw it primarily through the vista of what he considered to be an unvarnished Victorianism. In his memoir, *Beyond a Boundary*, James described his aunt Judith as ‘the English Puritanism incarnate’ (2005: 14) and his mother, who had been brought up by Wesleyans, as an adherent to ‘a moral non-conformism’ with ‘a depth and rigidity, which at times far exceeded Judith’s’ (ibid.: 21). The moral economy of this world and the rules that governed everyday practices from reading to sports was determined by the precepts and vocabularies that had come to shape the long nineteenth century. Cricket and the Victorian novel provided the prism through which James saw his world, leading him to conclude that it was not by accident that he had worshipped at the shrine of Puritanism, the public school code, and sports, a temple of culture whose pillars were W. G. Grace, John Bunyan, and *Vanity Fair*: ‘They were a trinity, three in one and one in three, the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Matthew being the son of Thomas, otherwise called Arnold of Rugby’ (James 2005: 26). Later, reflecting on the emergence of West Indian literature in the 1930s, James would note that his outlook was shaped by the ‘atmosphere of the literature of Western Europe’: ‘In my youth we lived according to the tenets of Matthew Arnold; we spread sweetness and light, and we studied the best that there was in literature in order to transmit it to the people’ (James 1980: 237).

And James was not the only colonial subject to live under the shadow of the Victorian text. When he applied for admission to Lincoln University in 1934, Kwame Nkrumah, one of the leading figures in the Pan-Africanist movement and first prime minister and president of Ghana, opened his application letter with a quote from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*: ‘So many worlds, so much to do/So Little done, such things to be’ (Nkrumah 1957: vii). Addressing the citizens of Maryland County, Liberia, to celebrate national Independence Day in 1861, Alexander Crummell chose as his topic ‘The English Language in Liberia’. He used the occasion to celebrate the language of the colonizer as the depository of ‘Anglo-Saxon values’ and as the conduit to the library of civilization – ‘the works of

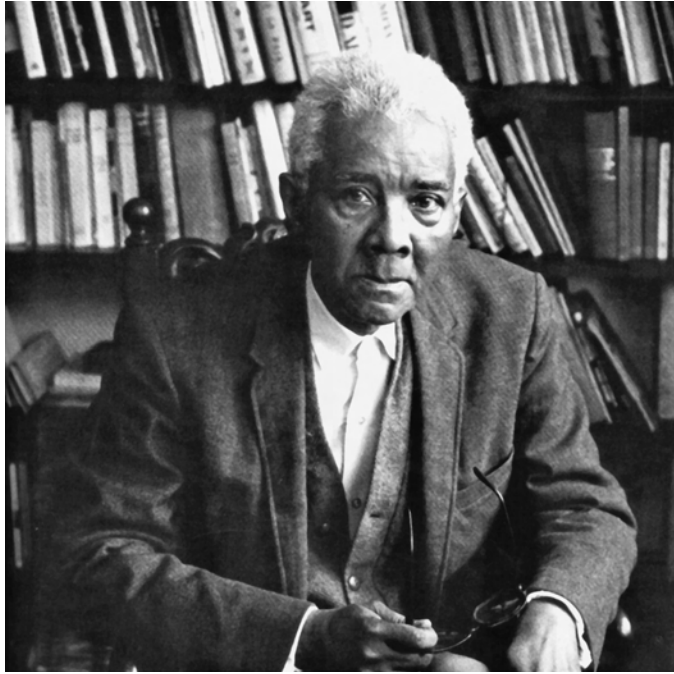


Figure 38.1 C. L. R. James (photograph) www.curtisbrown.co.uk/clr-james/

Spenser and Wordsworth, Coleridge and Campbell, Longfellow and Bryant, Whittier and Willis, and of that loftiest of all the bards of the day, ALFRED TENNYSON' (Crummell 1862: 12).

Why did these colonized people consider the Victorian text as essential to the way they understood their pasts and imagined their futures? What did they mean when they referred to Victorian values, ideas, and texts? And why did they seem to hold on to, and even valorize, what we now consider to be old-fashioned ideas about the culture of England in the nineteenth century? These are vexing questions for a number of reasons. For one, while we have now come to understand the conflicted nature of the Victorian itself, members of the black elite in Africa, America, and the Caribbean seemed to share a fairly unified culture, a confluence of what Marjorie Morgan, writing in a different context, has called manners and morals (1993: 1–2). Afro-Victorians were products of Christian missions and schools, which, irrespective of geographical difference, shared a common belief in the civilizing mission of colonialism. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that Afro-Victorian subjects, or Afro-Anglicans as they sometimes called themselves, were produced to enable the civilizing mission of colonialism (De Kock 1996).

In addition to a shared civilizational project, the lives and experiences of the key members of this group intersected in uncanny ways. Consider, for example, the different yet parallel lives and experiences of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the Reverend Tiyo Soga, one a Yoruba-speaking former slaver, the other born into the Xhosa ruling class: Crowther was captured as a slave and rescued from

a Portuguese slave ship off the coast of West Africa by a British naval group in 1821. He was taken to Sierra Leone where he was baptized and was educated at the Anglican school in Islington from 1825 to 1827. He later trained for the ministry and was ordained in 1843, returning to West Africa as a pioneer missionary, rising to become the first African bishop of West Africa in 1864 (Ade-Ajayi 1996). Tiyo Soga was born in the Eastern Cape in 1829, was educated at the Church of Scotland mission at Lovedale and Scotland where he was ordained a minister in 1857 (Williams 1968). Though separated by natal spaces, languages, and traditions, the lives, writings, and experiences of these prominent Africans were connected by a colonial culture whose mission was pegged on the ideas and mythologies of Victorian England. They were explorers, linguists, and evangelists in the fashion of David Livingstone and Robert Moffat. Like other Afro-Victorian men and women they often fashioned themselves as quintessential, some might say stereotypical, Victorian figures – missionaries, sages, and imperialists.

But Afro-Victorian subjects were not solely connected by, and through, a colonial network. As public men and women of letters, they shared a common cultural project – that of black racial uplift. It was in the name of black racial uplift that Afro-Victorians reached out to each other across national and regional boundaries, building long-lasting bridges between Africa and the Americas. Alexander Crummell, for example, was born in New York City in 1819 and educated at Cambridge University. He moved to Liberia in 1853 and spent the next 20 years helping build the institutions of the new black republic, functioning effectively as the Afro-Victorian sage (Rigsby 1987, Moses 1989, and Oldfield 1990). Similarly, Edward Wilmot Blyden, born in 1832 in the Virgin Islands, migrated to Liberia in 1851 and served the country as an educator, diplomat, and public intellectual (Lynch 1967). The intersections between the lives and experiences of these émigré intellectuals were crucial in mapping out the discourse on the future of Liberia. In 1862, Blyden was appointed professor of classics at Liberia College. From 1863 to 1866, Crummell served as professor of moral and intellectual philosophy at the same institution. Liberia College was non-sectarian, but its intellectual project was built along what its architects considered to be modern (and some might add Victorian) lines. Blyden considered the founding of Liberia College in 1862 to be a monumental event, one as important as the founding of the republic of Liberia in 1847. What made the founding of the college so important, Blyden argued in an address he gave in New York on 23 January 1862, was that it served as a counterpoint to enslavement and the ‘horrible sufferings’ of the ancestors. Having escaped ‘the fiery ordeal of oppression’, returned Africans were ‘laying the foundation of intellectual empire, upon the very soil whence their fathers were torn, in their ignorance and degradation’ (Blyden 1971: 219).

In rehearsing their access to civilized culture, Afro-Victorian intellectuals did not consider themselves different from, or peripheral to, the cultural projects that were emerging in Britain in the nineteenth century. Many members of the black elite in the nineteenth century posited themselves as actors and agents in the drama of empire. The Jamaican Mary Seacole served in the Crimea with Florence Nightingale (Seacole 1988). The Tswana linguist, Sol Plaatje, was a witness at the 1899 siege of Mafeking and kept a diary of the imperial event (Plaatje 1999). J. J. Thomas, the West Indian linguist, wrote his book *Froudacity* to counter James Anthony

Froude's imperial narrative, *The English in the West Indies*. Since they were made up of very small Creole communities, Afro-Victorians presented themselves as distinct from the mass of black people around them; they were defined by what a Lagos newspaper of the period described as the Afro-Victorian cultivated nature and homogeneity. Victorian Lagos, noted the *Eagle* of 28 July 1883, was the 'more cultivated portion of the community' unified by 'whatever rules of conduct it chooses to lay down' (quoted in Echeruo 1977: 2). The paper took it for granted that these rules of conduct could only be imported from Europe or America. The proper education of women in West Africa, for example, would be incomplete 'without their proceeding to a foreign civilized place' where their ideas would be 'enlarged' and there would be an 'interchange of thought with other foreign civilized elements that cannot be gained here' (quoted in Echeruo 1977: 53). Here and elsewhere, many members of the Afro-Victorian elite considered the work of civilization to be part of their colonial inheritance.

But if the cultural and intellectual work of these subjects was intended to show that the ideas being circulated in Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century were not incompatible with the aspirations of colonial subjects, they constantly run up against what may best be described as the compulsion of colonial control and governmentality (Burchell *et al.* 1991). For in a colonial setting in which all institutions of social life were centralized and controlled by the secretary of state for the colonies, as Eric Williams aptly put it, Victorian ideas and texts were part of an ideological structure whose universality was taken for granted (Williams 1969: 12). In the circumstances, the challenge facing colonized elites was to separate their own set of aspirations – progress, freedom, and civilization – from the regimen of colonial rule. Thus when Tiyo Soga embarked on his project of transforming the Xhosa into modern subjects in the 1840s his work, which included the translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, was focused on the role of civilization as 'the handmaid of Christianity' rather than the brutal pacification of the Eastern Cape by the British (Williams 1968: 67).

In the cases where colonized elites had facilitated the colonization of their people, and where their identification with the new order was almost absolute, Britain was imagined through the idealism associated with its institutions not its realities. Thus when Sir Apolo Kagwa, the regent of the Kingdom of Buganda, went to Britain in 1902 to witness the coronation of King Edward, his itinerary was structured by the need to witness the moral and political economy of Victorianism at play. He traveled through the realm with absolutely no sense of the decline of Victorian culture and its institutions, a process that had been evident since the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The king who was being crowned was old, sickly, and frail, but the landscape that generated wonder among the colonial visitors was the powerful, masculine world of industry and technology. On a visit to a sugar-making factory in Glasgow, Sir Apolo was mesmerized by the process of turning raw molasses into pure sugar; what would stand out in the description of the process provided by his secretary, Ham Mukasa, was the almost instinctive accounting of this process through the moral economy of labor:

There were many other processes, which it is difficult to describe in making this sugar, which was very sweet and in great quantities; but those who make

it have to work very hard. The machines of the English are many and are all over the land, but they cause a great deal of work; and because the English work so hard, therefore machinery spreads into all land.

(Mukasa 1989: 26; see also Gikandi 1998)

As I will show in the following discussion, the use of a vocabulary associated with Victorianism – its ideas, texts, and thinkers – dominated the discourse of black racial advancement. But at the same time, however, black elites recognized that their overall political project faced constant structural and ideological limits. Could a set of ideas and vocabularies developed to explain the state of Britain in the nineteenth century be applied to a world defined by racial and colonial subjection and subjectivity? What did it mean to be black and Victorian in the age of empire? Could a tradition defined by conservative instincts be the source of radical ideas about autonomy and nationhood?

But before embarking on an exploration of the troubled relation between black elites and Victorian ideas and texts, it is important to raise a question that has become inescapable in historical and cultural studies of the nineteenth century: what do we mean when we speak of Victorian ideas and what were their statuses in colonial places? The whole idea of Victorianism, or even the notion of a Victorian world, has now come to be criticized for assuming a homogeneity of culture and closed temporal boundaries in a period defined by historical tensions, social rupture, and an ongoing sense of crisis. The terms Victorian and Victorianism have been described as ‘chronologically indefensible, historically dubious, intellectually confusing and ideologically unacceptable’ (Lucas 2000: 29). Functioning under the shadow of the postmodern critique of grand and totalized narratives of social transformation, a new Victorian studies seems to be driven by the desire to recover what Matthew Arnold called the ‘multitudinousness’ of the age as the condition of existence of Victorianism and its modernizing drive (see Gilmour 1993: xiii–xv; Armstrong 1993: 1–21). Still, as Gilmour notes, industrial society had its own ‘legitimizing myths and models’ and Victorian intellectuals sought to establish a unified structure of values and a shared sensibility and moral code to explain their world to themselves (Gilmour 1993: 21).

In representing the problems and opportunities of their time as unique, Victorian intellectuals produced a public discourse that privileged the uniformity of the period at the expense of the conflicts and crises that defined it. Thus revisionist narratives of the Victorian period have tended to deconstruct the will to homogeneity and synchrony and to foreground the diachronic nature of the nineteenth century (see the essays collected in John and Jenkins 2000). But the critique of homogeneity and synchrony that now seems mandatory in the rethinking of the Victorian period still locates it within the discursive formation of the nineteenth-century middle class and its view of the world. Whether one focuses on how this class sought to impose its view of the world on the whole of British society or on the fissures that defined this project, one is still caught within the torsion of anxiety about Victorianism.¹

The terminologies we have developed to explain the nineteenth century may be inaccurate, but it is impossible to escape the fact that the discourse of Victorianism ‘was predominantly middle-class, masculine, and metropolitan’ (Gilmour 1993: 1).

This is the way Victorianism appeared to the colonized who, for reasons discussed below, did not see the fissures of the age or its sets of displacement but identified with what a homogenized worldview imposed from above. The case could be made that it was when it was most displaced from its institutional sites of origin in nineteenth-century Britain that Victorianism took on the solidity and seriousness that gave it the power, not only to appeal to colonial elites and their modernizing impulses, but to survive well into the middle of the twentieth century. Instinctively one might think that it is in the colonies that Victorianism finds itself in an intellectual and institutional vacuum and then withers away, but as the examples that opened this chapter suggest, Victorian ideals and practices seemed to have provided the colonized with an important conduit for understanding their own place in a century of radical change and transformation. It is true, of course, that Victorian ideas were limited to a small elite on the coastal regions of Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lagos, Cape Town) or the urban centers of the West Indies; it is also true that the majority of the colonized were left out of this worldview or were indifferent to it; nevertheless, the Afro-Victorian elite were influential because of their proximity to white power and their shared world view (see Echeruo 1977, Porter 1963, Wise 1991).

However, black elites were both insiders and outsiders to what they understood to be Victorianism. On one hand, this Victorianism was part of an indispensable social imaginary; it provided the moral codes and narratives through which the colonized imagined themselves as modern subjects, how they imagined their existence in the midst of the chaos of change, their expectations under the colonial contract, and ‘the deeper normative notions and images’ that defined social relationships in the landscape defined by subjection (Taylor 2004: 23). On the other hand, Victorianism was the sign of the colonial hegemon; it was part of a totality, a hegemonic discursive system defined by what Michel Foucault would call discursive regularities defined by ‘a group of traditions, observations, and heterogeneous practices’ rather than displacements and transformation (Foucault 1972: 33). This system derived its authority from its assumed and often unquestioned totality; for Lord Cromer, the British consul-general in Egypt, colonial power was affected through ‘systematic English inspection’ and control over the colonized (quoted in Mitchell 1991: 95–96). From his vantage point as the examiner of records for the Indian office, J. S. Mill saw writing as the system through which colonial executive authority was exercised; a complete system of ‘recordation’ was essential to the management of colonial affairs (quoted in Bhabha 1994: 93). However, it was not just colonial pro-consuls who viewed the world in such totalized terms or assumed the objective nature of the colonizing project. If colonial elites sought stability and security in the Victorian house of culture it was because the edifices that held this house together were considered uniform (see Gikandi 2008).

Victorianism in the colonies was not, of course, a hegemonic practice; it was often resisted or exploited, its vulnerabilities exposed and its moral economies and practices were reformulated to address the colonized’s needs for autonomy. Jean and John Comaroff have rightly called attention to the often-forgotten fact that the response of the colonized people (in their case the Tswana) was not a blind submission to the hegemonic drive of the colonial mission but ‘an effort to fashion an understanding of, and gain conceptual mastery over a changing world’

(Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 31). But the ideas, texts, and practices informing this process of change, the notions and images that needed to be reformulated to account for the lived experiences of colonized people had their genealogies elsewhere; they had evolved in a set of circumstances or had been responses to events that preceded the colonial enterprise itself.

For example, the evangelical moral code that informed James's mother had taken almost one hundred and fifty years to become the dominant creed of the Victorian middle class (see Altick 1973: 169–74, Arnstein 1992: 82–84, and Young 1977: 4–5); by the time the central doctrines of the Nonconformist movement arrived among the colonized, they had effectively been normalized. The Tswana listening to Robert and Mary Moffat, evangelical agents of the London Missionary Society in southern African in the 1820s and 1830s, may very well have been attuned to the contradictions of the evangelical message and were almost certainly aware of the gap between the moralizing drive of the new creed and their own lives, but they were perhaps not cognizant of the long history of the Nonconformist tradition that was transforming their lives (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 198–251). David Livingstone and his father-in-law Robert Moffat had differences of opinion about the missionary enterprise in southern Africa, and the enterprise of conversion did go through mutations as it confronted the challenges on the ground, but these were not significant enough to undermine the unified language used to sell their creed to the colonized. What had started in England as a Nonconformist movement was now the established church in the Bechuanaland territory. Moreover, the central categories in the new creed – the Protestant ideas of ‘personhood, belief, and conversion’ – rarely deviated from European conceptions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 251). In fact there was a clear dialectical relationship between missions abroad and at home: the missionary project was crucial in articulating what Susan Thorne has called ‘a distinctly middle-class vision’ of the British nation (1999: 52).

It may well be the case that the majority of African addressees were impervious to the Victorian creed, or used it as a means toward their own ends, but overall, Afro-Victorian elites invested heavily in the inherited concepts and vocabularies that would later turn out to provide intellectual opportunities or burdens. Educated and brought up to believe in the idea of moral probity and progress, the most prominent members of the black elite fashioned themselves and the institutions they built around the playbook of Victorianism. The most obvious examples of the colonized subject's reliance on the dominant discourse can be found in the role assigned to women in the Afro-Victorian world. It is generally accepted that the dominant Victorian view of gender was that men and women were born ‘to fulfill different roles in life’ and ‘the woman's special role was defined that of home and family’ (Black and MacRaild 2003: 245; 256). But women were also considered to be the custodians of civility. Indeed, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the quintessential American Victorian sage, had made the influential claim that women, because of their mastery of ‘Conversation’ and their ‘social influence’, were ‘the civilizers of mankind’ (Emerson 2011). Afro-Victorian intellectuals seemed to have endorsed this perspective without reservations. In fact, one of Crummell's major complaints was that a history of enslavement had kept black women ‘ignorant of the habitudes of neatness, and the requirements of order’ (1969: 68). For Crummell, the goal of

educating women was to secure in them dignity, sense, and sensibility which were the ‘refinements of civilization’ (Crummell 1969: 74); without the ‘elements and qualities’ of womanhood, ‘no true nationality, patriotism, religion, cultivation, family life, or true status is a possibility’ (Crummell 1969: 79). This view was shared by Anna Julia Cooper, the black feminist writer, who argued that the redemption of American civilization depended on existence of an elevated ‘homelife’ and the influence of good women in those homes (Cooper 1988: 12).

But this espousal of dominant Victorian ideas was often done in the absence of independent structures and institutions to authorize them. What this meant, among other things, was that except in the Republic of Liberia, colonial elites operated within the colonial infrastructure of colonialism and were often active agents of the civilizational project of the nineteenth century in the colonial frontier. The project of understanding the African, noted MacGregor Laird, the Scottish merchant and explorer, depended on the deployment of efficient ‘Native agents’; the return of ‘the civilized Africa to his native country, carrying the English habits and language with him, must be spontaneous and self-supporting’ (in Crowther 1970: xi). Bishop Crowther concurred, noting that the connection between England and West Africa could be established through African converts who could be returned to ‘their country as renewed people, looked upon by their countrymen as superior to themselves, so long as they continue consistent in their Christian walk and conversion, and do not disgrace themselves by following heathenish practices’ (Crowther 1970: xvii).

Although Laird and Crowther, like Livingstone, saw trade as essential to the process of conversion and rule, the transmission of cultural, moral, and religious ideas from England to West Africa was assumed to be paramount. This emphasis on ideas or discourses as the medium of understanding social life was, of course, a very Victorian notion in itself.² But ideas were particularly important to Afro-Victorian subjects for two reasons: first, coming from very diverse backgrounds, Afro-Victorians were united by ideas such as morality and civilization, labor, and duty. These ideas created the discursive field in which the colonized could speak about their relationship to each other and their connection to regional and international cultural projects. Second, Victorianism in the colonies did not have visible signifiers. Few of the institutions of industrial society – the railway stations, the factories, and the places of entertainment – were to be found in Africa or the West Indies.

If one considers the railroad to be the quintessential emblem of the industrial culture of the nineteenth century, its absence in most of Africa is stark. A few rail lines were built in South Africa in the middle of the nineteenth century, but they did not make their presence in West and East Africa until the last decade of the nineteenth century. The only institution that had a long life on most of the continent was the Christian mission and the schools associated with it. While missionaries could embark on the transformation of a few African souls, these were not emplaced in tangible institutions. Clearly, all the great assemblages and practices that have come to denote Victorian culture in Britain – transformation in the political economy, reform bills, new cultural institutions – are marked by their paucity or absence in Africa and the Caribbean. Except for those lucky enough to belong to the few colonial schools such as Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, the

Creole cultures of Sierra Leone, or the cultural institutions of the Cape Colony, African elites often found themselves in a world where words exist outside the domain of things and signs were detached from signifiers. Indeed, the rhetoric of Afro-Victorianism derived most of its authority from the bravura effect that emerges when powerful signs refer to the absence of things. Throughout their travel in Britain, Sir Apolo and his secretary, Ham Mukasa, observed many things for which they had no descriptive language and they would try and explain what they had encountered by expressing their sense of awe or by signaling the impossibility of representation. The following description of the process of refining sugar in Greenock, Scotland, is exemplary of the Afro-Victorian's discourse of wonder:³ 'They boil the sugar, and pass it over the burnt bones of cattle and other animals; these bones are all burned and become charcoal; one can only wonder at the use they make of these bones – one cannot explain it' (Mukasa 1989: 125). Ideas and concepts, rather than practices, were easier to describe and transport from Britain to the colonial world.

How, then could ideas be directed to the project of transforming colonial society without an institutional framework? The first thing to acknowledge here is that the separation of words and things in the Afro-Victorian world necessitated the development of a compensatory rhetoric. Victorian texts were cited and recited to support positions or as counterpoints. Crummell had read his Carlyle well. As I will show below, Crummell would rehearse Carlyle's *Past and Present* to buttress his view that labor was the essence of character; but he could also use his observations in Liberia to argue that contrary to 'Mr. Carlyle and all his brother anthropologists' the African did indeed work (Crummell 1969: 175). If Afro-Victorians seemed to consider ideas and texts to be more important than realities and experiences, it is because compared to the static nature of colonial society, the intangible represented what Marjorie Morgan has aptly termed 'the realm of aspirations' (Morgan 1993: 2) and books provided models of emulation. In the hands of the colonized readers, such as C. L. R. James's mother, almost any text could become a conduct book:

There was, however, another side to my mother which she brought from her convent. She was a reader, one of the most tireless I have ever known. Usually it was novels, any novel. Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Hall Caine, Stevenson, Mrs. Henry Wood, Charlotte Bronte, Charlotte Braeme, Shakespeare (she had her own copy which I read to pieces), Balzac, Nathaniel Hawthorne, a woman called Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Fenimore Cooper, Nat Gould, Charles Garvice, anything and everything, and as she put them down I picked them up. I remember her warning me not to read books by one Victoria Cross, but I found the books hidden in one of her dressers and read them just the same.
(James 2005: 21)

Out of this library of Victorianism, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* became James's ur-text – 'my Homer and my bible' (ibid.: 22), reading the book for what he described as its 'rhythms and moralism' (ibid.: 23), and turning it into his refuge (ibid.: 24). For James, reading and rereading *Vanity Fair* was much more than the display of the colonized ability to master a canonical text. In fact, James claimed

that he had no notion that the novel was considered to be a classic until much later in life: 'I read it because I wanted to' (ibid.: 22). Still, James was not reading Thackeray for pleasure but for a model of British conduct. He admired Major Dobbin for his 'British reticence, the British self-discipline' (ibid.: 52). He considered Dobbin's attitude to language as the proper conduct of a nineteenth-century gentleman: 'His life is one long repression of speech except when he speaks for others', concluded James (ibid.: 52). Turning to Pendennis, James identified Henry Esmond as a representative of – not 'the aristocracy of the early eighteenth century' – but 'the solid British middle class, Puritanism incarnate, of the middle of the nineteenth century' (ibid.: 53). But this map of reading or misreading, to borrow Harold Bloom's terms, was not simply motivated by a desire to master what the colonial school had identified as the Victorian code of conduct, but a deep sense of alienation from the material life of colonial society (ibid.: 3–9). James would come to realize that organizing one's life according to Arnold of Rugby and the mastery of cricket as the embodiment of a certain moral code would be the source of a crisis of selfhood – 'a war between English Puritanism, English literature and cricket, and the realism of West Indian life' (ibid.: 26).

The gap between codes promoted by school or mission and the real lived experiences of the colonized would lead to an important reconfiguration of the politics of time in a colonial situation. Emerging out of the crisis of the first half of the nineteenth century, Victorian intellectuals in Britain had invented a structure of time that would seem to stabilize social life. They had invented a stable past, located either in antiquity or medievalism as a counterpoint to the 'condition of England question'; they had also invented the category of progress to provide a teleological narrative of time.⁴ All these developments led to the consolidation of what Hewitt has described as a 'Victorian temporal regime' (Hewitt 2006: 427). But for Afro-Victorian subjects, the colonial situation could not allow for a temporal regime whose value was either invested in the past or the imagination of the future. Afro-Victorian subjects were sensitive to the notion that their world was, like that of other Victorians, defined by temporal transformations, but the framework they had to work with excluded the possibility that either past or present could provide stable epistemological frameworks. Afro-Victorian subjects could not assume the stability of time, either as a space of experience or expectation, without falling into bad faith (Koselleck 1985: 270–72).⁵ Many of them seemed to live in fear of the past and the possibility of a degeneracy defined by either barbarism or slavery. It is not by accident that the majestic histories of the Afro-Victorians, most notably Carl C. Reindorf's *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* and Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yoruba* were not published until the 1890s, at the dawn of African nationalism.

For many black intellectuals in the nineteenth century, an engagement with the task of time was not driven by a sense of historicity but the need to account for the present. Thus, Crummell considered the duty of the modern black subject to 'lie in the future': looking back to the past would be tantamount to embracing slavery as the primal scene of subjection (Crummell 1969: 13; see Hartman 1977). Crummell worried that there was a tendency 'in the Negro mind' to 'dwell morbidly and absorbingly upon the servile past' at the expense of a reflection on 'the urgent needs of the present' and the 'fast-crowding and momentous interests of the future'

(Crummell 1969: 14). He seemed to recoil from the archeological gestures of his Victorian contemporaries, expressing the fear that the project of recuperating the past was inseparable from memory and remembering, which could lead the black race back into mental slavery and bondage, confirm ‘morbidly and degeneracy’ and perpetuate ‘the facts of servitude and degeneracy’ (Crummell 1969: 15). He feared that the constant recollection of slavery ‘as the commanding thought of a new people’ would retard their march ‘on to the broadest freedom of thought in a new and glorious present, and a still more magnificent future’ (Crummell 1969: 18). Crummell’s majestic claim was that former slaves had embarked on an exodus from the land of bondage and had been permitted by ‘a generous Providence to enter the new and exalted pathways of freedom’ (Crummell 1969: 19).

Given the difference in status and standing it is easy, of course, to focus on the differences between mainstream Victorian intellectuals and their Afro-Victorian counterparts, to stress deviations and transformations instead of thinking about a shared grid of what Foucault would call ‘identities, similitudes, analogies’ (Foucault 1994: xix). In regard to the question of labor, for example, Carlyle and Crummell shared a conceptual vocabulary, which reflected their coevalness. On the surface, the gap separating Carlyle’s laborer (invested in the practice of free labor even when the conditions were not optimal) and Crummell’s former slaves (still entrapped in the most alienated form of labor possible) was immense. Carlyle presented work in *Past and Present* as noble and sacred, the conduit to truth, ‘to Nature’s appointments and regulations, which are truth’ (Carlyle 2000: 196). In a world of chaos and fragmentation, he claimed, even the meanest form of labour had the capacity to compose the soul ‘into a kind of real harmony’ (ibid.: 196). Work and working represented the free will of the individual; when workers set themselves to their task with valor, they became free: ‘The man is now a man. The blessed glow of labour in him, is it not a purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made a bright blessed flame!’ (ibid.: 196). In contrast, Crummell’s black laborer lived in a world of radical alienation and debasement. The ‘sad peculiarity’ of black labor in America was that it was ‘rude, untutored, and debased’ (Crummell 1969: 28). And yet Crummell could still embrace the redemptive qualities of labor enumerated by Carlyle whom he often cited and recited (see Crummell 1969: 394). Clearly, Crummell turned to the question of labor not solely because he considered it to be the most urgent problem facing black Americans, but because he was aware that it was already part of the discursive formation of Victorianism of which he considered them an integral part. This was the topic that was ‘exciting more interest and anxiety’ than any other. It had been identified and privileged as the explanatory mode of the nineteenth century and of a modern identity and could hence not be ignored (Crummell 1969: 26–27).⁶

Affiliating with the grammar of the times was essential to the work and identity of Afro-Victorian subjects’ relationship to the structures, institutions, and ideas of their time; Victorianism provided them with the language for accounting for the place of the black subject in the emerging discourses and the moral economies that they presupposed. Affiliation with Victorianism also provided black intellectuals with the authority of criticism. Having understood and elaborated the grid in which the leading questions of the time were discussed, Crummell would understand the nature of black lack and difference in relation to the intellectual configurations of

the time. He understood, for example, that an almost ‘angry contest was going on upon the relations of capital to labour’ and all ‘the activity of the keenest intellectuals’ was employed to figure out the questions of wage, the production of wealth, and the value of labor, but all these contests and debates were ‘for the *white* labor of this great nation’ (Crummell 1969: 27). Recognizing the negation of black labourers in such debates, Crummell would set out to make a crucial structural distinction between white labour (intelligent, organized, and protected by statute) to black labour defined by what he called ‘sad conditions’ of disorganization and rudeness an ‘almost servile status’ and ‘its insecure and defenseless abjectness’ (ibid.: 27). He rejected any claims that black labour was by nature inferior; his complaint was that it had not been allowed to enter the domain of the modern and was still entrapped in the feudal organizations that had sustained slavery (ibid.: 30–31).

Crummell was not rejecting Victorian vocabularies on labor or related matters. He could not, as a matter of fact, imagine labor as a conceptual category outside the vocabularies that were current in his time. His discourse on labor, for example, was essentially a moral discourse. The way out of ‘the injustice and grinding tyranny’ of servitude, argued Crummell, was through the development of ‘personal qualities such as thrift, energy and manliness’ (ibid.: 31). Moral elevation was promoted as ‘the highest ambition’ of the black race:

What we need is a grand moral revolution which shall touch and vivify the inner life of a people, which shall give them dissatisfaction with ignoble motives and sensual desires, which shall bring to them a resurrection from inferior ideas and lowly ambitions; which shall shed illumination through all the chambers of their souls, which shall lift them up to lofty aspirations, which shall put them in the race for manly moral superiority.

(Crummell 1969: 34)

Here, as elsewhere, Crummell was speaking the established moral language of Victorian evangelicalism, which presented work as the ‘infallible doctrine’ of Victorianism (Altick 1973: 168).

Ultimately, the identity of Afro-Victorians would come to depend on their ability to claim the Victorian doxa and deploy it toward their own ends – the imagination of new spaces of freedom. This explains why terms such as civilization and culture acquired such immense value in Afro-Victorian thought. Indeed, if one were looking for the one term that unified Afro-Victorian subjects across cultures and traditions and connected them to mainstream Victorianism, it was the ideas of civilization and culture, which were often considered to be ‘the primal need of the race’ (Crummell 1992: 195–99). Crummell was clearly echoing Matthew Arnold when he declared, in his inaugural address to the American Negro Academy (1897) that the realization of ‘a true and lofty *race* of men’ depended on ‘the force and application of the highest arts; not mere mechanism’ (Crummell 1992: 196). But as we have already seen, the act of translation was hampered by the absence of viable institutions in which ideas could be put into practice. Crummell was a distinguished Anglican minister and scholar with a Cambridge degree, but in the

United States he was a pariah in the Episcopal Church (Du Bois 1990: 160–61). The challenge now was how to translate ideas developed in the metropolitan centers of Victorianism to the colonial periphery. Here, again, comparisons between Victorian notions and Afro-Victorian concepts can help us understand the difficulties of sustaining ideas outside an authorized institutional framework.

Consider, for example, the idea of culture. It is now generally accepted that the idea of culture did not develop as what Raymond Williams considered to be a separate sphere of moral and intellectual activity (Williams 1983: xviii); rather, the idea of culture was an essential part of the thinking about, and consolidation of, the state in the nineteenth century (see Lloyd and Thomas 1997). The great advances in what Hoppen has called the business of culture developed in a framework in which aesthetic objects were connected to market forces and the institutions of a modern industrial society (Hoppen 1998: 372–426). It is, of course, true that the idea of culture tended to derive its authority from its claim to constitute a separate sphere of activity; in fact, Matthew Arnold described culture as the antidote to the corrupting influences of materialism, asserting that its role was analogous to that of religion (Arnold 2006: 35). Still, in spite of Arnold's abstract sense of culture, either as the voice of 'the deepest human experience' or the will to perfection, cultural practices were given a certain presence, a materiality as it were, by the institutions in which they functioned (*ibid.*: 35–36). The power of culture depended on its connection to certain institutions including Oxford and the Church of England. The Oxford of the past had many faults, Arnold asserted, yet members of the institution (those 'brought up amidst the beauty and sweetness of that place') had grasped one fundamental truth – 'the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection' (Arnold 2006: 46). Here, we have a clear association between a class, a place, and a concept.

In contrast, Afro-Victorian subjects lived in a world in which the ideas they espoused – Victorian ideas – were essentially homeless. The idea of culture was dear to the Afro-Victorian elite, but they were exiles from the institutions in which these ideas were produced and consumed. Writing at the end of the Victorian era, Du Bois considered culture to be essential to the making and imagination of the black American as a modern subject. Culture had the power and capacity to overcome the bonds of race and racial difference:

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension.
(Du Bois 1990: 82)

But this invocation of the gospel of culture was defeated by the conditions in which Du Bois found himself, trapped in the veil of race and 'the dull red hideousness of Georgia' (Du Bois 1990: 82). As a member of what he called the Talent Tenth, Du Bois should have been teaching at Harvard, not in the rural South (see Du Bois 1969).

Clearly, any idea of culture as what Williams would call ‘an abstraction and an absolute’ was ineffective unless it was connected to institutions (Williams 1983: xviii). For this reason, the cultural project of the Afro-Victorian elite in the second half of the nineteenth century – when the idea of nationality had taken root and the destiny of individuals was linked to that of states – was essentially how to create a nation to house ideas. The belief here was that cherished Victorian ideas such as the improvement of character and moral probity could only flourish within the institutional framework provided by the modern state. In an oration that he gave to the Common Council and Citizens of Monrovia in 1855, Crummell insisted that the nation was a moral body, one with duties and obligations. The cultivation of the moral character of individuals was important, but the ‘cultivation of the manhood of a nation’, which drew its energies from ‘all the sources in the commonwealth’ was paramount (Crummell 1862: 76). Liberia would be the quintessential evangelical nation, held together by a strict moral code, a binding work ethic, and free trade (*ibid.*: 92). The declaration of the Republic of Liberia, Blyden noted in a 1859 address, had demonstrated that ‘notwithstanding the oppression of ages, the energies of the race had not been entirely emasculated, but were still sufficient to establish and maintain a nationality’ (Blyden 1971: 72). Liberia had been founded to provide a space in which Victorian ideas would be appropriated, rehearsed, and embodied outside the regimen of racial bondage and imperial control.

But the task of transporting Victorian ideas to the West African coast would come up against two major problems: the first one was that while the Afro-Victorians were now in charge of the business of regulating their own affairs in Liberia, they soon discovered that ideas were hard to sustain when their efficacy was measured by actual existing cultural practices or governmental policies. The issue of labor provides a vivid illustration of the perils of turning ideas into practices. As we saw earlier, Crummell had unquestionably adopted the dominant Victorian idea that work was the essence of character. He had then proceeded to argue that in order for former slaves to realize their potential as free modern subjects, they needed to be turned into true workers. In Liberia, however, labor was not an autonomous agency of will but was caught up in competing interests, between settlers and natives and the Afro-American elite and various imperial interests. Whatever the Afro-American elite thought about the capacity of the natives of Liberia for industry and labor, they assumed that they were untutored, that their industriousness needed to be shaped to fit into the habits and training developed in Europe or America (Crummell 1969: 248). The African-American elite in Liberia was committed to the creation of a new labor force out of the Liberian native but they had little understanding of the cultures and practices of the people they sought to uplift. Indeed, Blyden was to complain later, as colonizers on the West African coast, the Afro-American elite was imprisoned in ‘the social, industrial and religious theories which they had brought with them from America’ (Blyden 1971: 122).

A second problem arose in the translation of Victorian concepts in localities that were defined as inherently outside the orbit of those ideas. For if the singular idea of civilization, which animated Victorian discourses, was premised on the existence of an uncivilized other of which the African was the quintessential exemplar, how could Afro-Victorian subjects claim kinship with Africa and yet sustain their own

civilization project? The simplest response to this question was for the Afro-Victorian elite to adopt the language of civilization and position themselves as its vanguard on the West African coast, engaged in the work of guiding what they considered to be the uncivilized ‘up to the higher levels of improvement and civilization’ (Crummell 1969: 193–94). In trying to put the ideas of civilization into practice, the Afro-Victorian elite adopted the methods of evangelicalism as, in G. M. Young’s words, ‘a most effective technique of agitation, of private persuasion and social persecution’ (1977: 4). For Crummell, then, the work of Afro-American colonization – the ‘special duty and mission’ of black settlers in Liberia – was to compete with European and American missionaries to open ‘a highway for the gospel of Christ Jesus into the far interior’ (Crummell 1862: 88). The problem with this rhetoric of improvement was that Afro-Americans could only carry out the civilizational project by affiliating themselves with European colonizers and by distancing themselves from what Blyden called ‘the laws of Africa’ (Blyden 1971: 124). To achieve its standing as a nation among nations, an act considered essential to overcoming the slander against the black race, Liberia was to be fashioned in proper Victorian fashion, warts and all. A Crummell speaking to the American Geographical Society in New York on the intricate work of colonial evangelicalism and commerce was no different from a Livingstone addressing the Royal Geographical Society in London (Crummell 1969: 314).

There is one final question to pose: were Afro-Victorian subjects engaged in acts of mimicry or tactics of resistance?⁷ There was mimicry, of course. Crowther, for example, assumed that his role as a missionary, teacher, and explorer was to support British interests. He may have been born Yoruba, but his primary identity was that of an Anglican and subject of the crown engaged unquestionably in the soul-saving project of empire – ‘a rapid overspread of Christianity in the countries on the banks of the Niger, and in the heart of Africa’ (Crowther 1968: 36). But there was resistance, too. Blyden strongly disagreed with the imperial dictum that the civilization of Africa was ‘to be organized according to foreign patterns’ (1888: 82). Often, mastery and mimicry went hand in hand. Mastering Victorian moral and cultural codes meant, first and foremost, their mimicry and then their transportation to what had been previously considered to be sites of difference such as the interior of Africa.

There were also instances in which mimicry and resistance converged: this would happen when Afro-Victorian subjects became cognizant of the crisis of Victorianism itself (especially in the last two decades of the nineteenth century) or when they were confronted with the limits of the civilizational project in impoverished institutional contexts. In dealing with the harsh realities of Liberia, Crummell could not accept the Arnoldian dictum that culture was the end and object of life; he retreated from a celebration of culture as the means and ends of racial uplift and embraced utility as ‘the substance and reality of our life’ (Crummell 1969: 348). Crummell was not willing to give up the idea that colonial evangelism was part of a providential design but he was convinced that the true test of ideas such as culture and civilization was in their implementation, and in this respect the nation of Liberia was defined by what he considered to be grave errors and mistakes (ibid.: 168).

Significantly, the subjects who had been most ardent in the promotion of Victorian ideas were also among the first to produce a sustained critique of the civilizational project of the nineteenth century. In fact, one of the great paradoxes of postcolonial identity in Africa is that what had once appeared to be the slavish imitation of Victorian ideas could lay the groundwork for black nationalism in Africa and the Caribbean. It is impossible to develop a discourse of radical nationalism in West Africa without considering the role played by Blyden in advocating for freedom from inherited concepts about culture and society. The history of decolonization in the West Indies is now written around the ideas, if not activities, of James and Williams, the belated Afro-Victorians. If Du Bois is now considered to be the founder of Pan-Africanism, his ideas cannot exist without the foundations laid down by Crummell, his intellectual mentor. In these circumstances, Afro-Victorian subjects are best understood neither as sycophants nor rebels but as people engaged in a sustained project to appropriate, revise, and sometimes displace Victorian ideas toward what had become, by the end of the nineteenth century, Pan-African goals.

The Nigerian novelist Wole Soyinka once presented an image of Bishop Ajayi Crowther as the embodiment of a colonized mentality confined to 'groveling before his white missionary superiors in a plea for patience and understanding of his 'backward, heathenish, brutish brothers' (Soyinka 1976: xii). This image repressed two essential and redemptive points: the first point was that Crowther was the grandfather of Herbert Macaulay, considered to be the founder of Nigerian nationalism (see Ade-Ajayi 1996). The second point was that the Anglican mission and school that Crowther had founded at Abeokuta was to produce radical nationalists including Wole Soyinka and his cousin Fela Ransome Kuti. The path from Afro-Victorianism could lead to unexpected ends.

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NOTES

- 1 I borrow the terms here from Michel Foucault who argues that the substitution of the theme of madness for that of death in the culture of the late Middle Ages ‘does not mark a break, but rather a torsion within the same anxiety’ (1988: 16).
- 2 This is the assumption of classical studies by John Holloway, Basil Willey, and Raymond Williams. Revisionist exploration of the role of ideas in Victorian culture can be found in Collini 1991, Joyce 1994, and Morgan 1990. A powerful critique of the practice of cultural criticism (the tradition to which my contribution belongs) can be found in Collini 2000.
- 3 For a discussion of the discourse of wonder and the rhetoric of discovery see Greenblatt 1991.
- 4 For debates on Victorian notions of time, the invention of the idea of progress, and the recuperation of the past, see Buckley 1966, Bowler 1989, and Dellheim 1992.
- 5 The terms here come from Reinhart Koselleck: ‘experience is present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered’; ‘expectation also takes place in the today; it is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed’ (1985: 272).
- 6 On the emergence of labor as a defining category of modern life, see Foucault 1994: 250–302.

- 7 For mimicry see Homi Bhabha (1994). The thin line between mimicry and resistance has been identified by Michel de Certeau writing of Native Americans in the period of the Spanish Conquest: ‘Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept’ (de Certeau 1984: viii).

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

LEARNING THE RULES OF THE GAME

Informal empire and the
Mexican experience at Stonyhurst
College, 1805–1920



Víctor M. Macías-González

Few details escaped Lt Col Pablo Escandón y Barrón (1857–1926), a British public school educated socialite who served on the Mexican presidential staff from 1897 to 1911. As arbiter of precedence, the polyglot diplomat knew the ways of the *beau monde*, staged international conferences, and decorated government offices.¹ For the 1909 Díaz-Taft interview in Ciudad Juárez, Escandón built a processional route flanked by whitewashed eagle-topped pilasters. Along it circulated state landaus guarded by the Mexican hussars in their trademark horse hair crested polished gilded helmets (Vega 1909). As chief crafter of state pageantry, Escandón's work went beyond smoke and mirrors; he served in the army, Congress, and as governor. Escandón also sat on the boards of banks, commercial firms, and social clubs, represented Mexico at George V's coronation and at the 1900 Olympics (Ortega y Pérez Gallardo 1908–10, 3: 58–59 and Macías-González 2006: 83–108).

The social and cultural capital of individuals like Escandón helped Mexico to counter and engage *informal empire*, the way that metropole, periphery, competing powers, and local interests negotiated, challenged, and reformulated the boundaries of national sovereignty to extract advantageous conditions from occasional slips 'into the gaps and grooves in national sovereignty' (Brown 2008: 21). Less costly than conquest and colonization, this indirect, non-violent subordination of others depended on 'economic sanctions or rewards . . . [diplomacy], and . . . diffuse cultural affinities', in Alan Knight's recent iteration (Brown 2008: 29–30). Historians know much about how states engaged in informal empire, but have only begun to grasp how schools – and the shared experiences and attitudes these fostered – shaped international relations through their inculcation of dominant powers' culture to the children of peripheral elites. Culture – as much as gunboat diplomacy, interest rates, and contracts – was a medium of disparate encounters, and as Louise Guenther has recently argued, historians need to recognize the cultural and gendered dimensions of international affairs (Brown 2008: 208–28). Michel de Certeau's observations of how subalterns appropriate or consume elite culture (specifically



Figure 39.1 The Escandón y Barrón brothers, London, 1911. From left to right: Manuel Escandón y Barrón, marqués de Villavieja, founder of the Cercle de Polo de París. Colonel Pablo Escandón y Barrón, chief of staff of President Porfirio Díaz and governor of Morelos state. Eustaquio Escandón y Barrón, marqués de Barrón. Source: Manuel de Escandón y Barrón, *Life Has Been Good. Memoirs of the Marqués de Villavieja*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1938, p. 218.

language) are useful to understanding the case of British public school educated Mexicans in ‘informal empire’. De Certeau noted that ‘imposed knowledge and symbolism’ was ‘manipulated by practitioners’ to ‘sketch out’ different interests and desires in a tactical manner (1984: 32–38). Schools like Stonyhurst – the first Jesuit ‘public school’ – trained future agents of empire and the peripheral elites whom they engaged in diplomacy, trade, and finance. Escandón y Barrón, who studied at Stonyhurst in 1867–75, formed part of a cadre of over 150 elite Mexican youths educated there in the Victorian age, obtaining insight into Britain’s commercial and political ethos from teachers and classmates, learning the rules of the game that allowed them to represent and advocate for Mexican interests subject to British informal empire (Bourdieu 1996: 180–83).

A historiographic debate on the utility of ‘informal empire’ as a category of analysis has raged among historians of Latin American–British relations since the 1990s, in part residue of the displacement of dependency theory by the field’s gradual embrace of postcolonial, cultural, and gender studies (Meyer 1991, Vargas 2006). Models of state relations explaining informal empire and its operation suggest that it functioned best when weak Latin American states were unable to react to British merchants and investors seeking advantages at local sovereignty’s expense (Winks 1976: 540–56). Agents of informal empire proffered diplomatic

and commercial entreaties with episodic harshness. Informal empire lessened, as Latin America became stable, affluent, developed strong institutions, and professionalized the state apparatus. Thanks to their ability to deploy social and cultural capital accumulated over extensive foreign travel, residence, education, and membership in transnational social and business networks, men like Escandón y Barrón negotiated, challenged, and reformulated Mexico's national interests vis-à-vis European powers vying for Mexico's markets and resources (Schell 2001: ix–xi.) Although specialists like Ann Laura Stoler have questioned the utility of informal empire, dismissing it as 'an unhelpful euphemism' (2006: 136), other scholars have stressed its importance. Aguirre argued that Victorian scientists and policy makers appropriated Mesoamerican antiquities, wrote intelligence reports and travel narratives buttressing British superiority vis-à-vis Latin America (Aguirre 2005: xvi–xviii). Such works, however, fail to acknowledge the agency of Latin Americans. Through their strategic appropriation and deployment of British goods, ideas, and policies via transatlantic networks, interests, and trajectories (including social, political, and economic links with elite Britons), Stonyhurst-educated Mexicans engaged and reworked their relationship with British interests. By focusing on the acquisition and deployment of Victorian cultural capital in Mexico we can see that elite Mexicans had greater agency – in De Certeau's words, 'us[ing], manipulat[ing] and divert[ing]' – in essence turning the ideas of the Anglo-American establishment against itself (1984: 30). Turning Britons' own class and racial assumptions against them, Mexicans' engagement with *informal empire* illustrates the political importance of culture. Mexicans and other Latin Americans' apt assimilation of British cultural competencies undermined British superiority, and mitigated and negotiated the cultural dimension of transatlantic economic and political relations.

From the 1820s on, Anglophile Mexicans embraced British trade goods, innovations, and the capital to jumpstart the extractive sector and manufacturing. They were interlocutors of both societies, benefitting from privileged access to the British agents, technical workers, merchants, and investors present in Mexico – but also from direct access to Great Britain during their studies there (Heath 1993, Jiménez Codinach 1991, Randall 1985, Sweet 1997). Some had British butlers, valets, coach drivers, governesses, and administrators who enhanced their deployment of Victorian innovations in household and estate management. Estate managers knowledgeable in the latest techniques were in great demand – especially Lancashire Catholics – on haciendas in Tlaxcala and Puebla (Noble 2010 and Tweedie 1911: 15–163). British-educated men legally represented or partnered with Anglo-American commercial interests, profiting handsomely. The nascent Mexican state drew on British-educated men to handle affairs with the US and UK at a time when there was a shortage of English speakers. By mid century, chronic economic and political instability decreased the incentive for British activities in Mexico. But once the troubles passed – and particularly during the Porfirian age (1876–1911) – Mexico became stable and prospered. Stonyhurst 'old boys' exerted great influence from the interlocking boards of industry, banking, and government. Individuals such as Mexico City Mayor Guillermo de Landa y Escandón, alderman Fernando Pimentel y Fagoaga, and attorney Luis Riba had extensive personal and family ties to the Stonyhurst Mexican community – and were among the 15 most central power brokers of the 1890s–1920s, serving on bank, mining, railway, utility, real estate,

and oil company boards (Musacchio and Read 2007: 842–80, Pérez-Rayón 1995). From the Congress, ministries, governorships, diplomatic posts, and city councils, they drafted legislation, regulated industry, negotiated and approved treaties.

Stonyhurst classmates established life-long contacts with each other while assimilating the gentry's ethos of service and duty with a Catholic twist. Public schools like Stonyhurst emerged more socially exclusive from the Clarendon Commission's (1861–64) disciplinary and financial reforms. Renewed emphasis on character, sports culture, leadership development, and regimentation provided class cohesion, and fostered a market-oriented, liberal entrepreneurial culture (Bamford 1961: 232, Rodríguez 2003: 737–57). These changes attracted elite Mexicans, providing them and the regime they sustained with the socio-cultural capital to confront Anglo-American informal empire (Shroobree 1988: 1–4).

Schools like Stonyhurst were 'contact zones', complex social spaces 'where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in [the] context of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt 1991: 33). They transmitted to Britons and Mexicans knowledge of each other and of the underlying rules of engagement, particularly the ethos of 'gentlemanly capitalism', the London-based nexus of real estate, financial, and service sectors that created imperial policy through a business culture predicated on the frequent exchange of information and intelligence in tight social circles. Public school friendships established intimate interpersonal knowledge and a common trust stoked in the clubroom, the boardroom, and often strengthened by inter-marriage and other affinities (Brayshaw, Cleary and Selwood 2007: 144–67).

Foreign boarding schools like Stonyhurst transformed Mexican secular and religious elites, modernizing and updating colonial hierarchic groups into less local, more national and transnational elites that modernized Mexico under Porfirio Díaz's rule (1876–1911). These schools introduced the children of aristocratic families to those of plutocrats and to protégés of Church hierarchs. More than 'informal empire', it is best to analyze the experience of Mexican students at Victorian boarding schools from their own perspective, assigning them agency. They were enterprising cultural brokers who selectively adapted Victorian cultural constructs like 'gentlemanly capitalism' to Mexican conditions and priorities, studying, comparing, mediating, improvising, and innovating on the model. In Mexico, they implanted or transmitted consumption patterns, news, and ideas; they were master *bricoleurs*, resourcefully applying old tools and approaches to solve new challenges (Roche 2000, 2003).

Why Stonyhurst? Education at foreign boarding schools accorded elite children social and cultural capital that enhanced their family networks' ability to adjust to the challenges of the modern world they engaged. A Stonyhurst education cost £150–£300 per year, between tuition, room and board, extracurriculars, clothing, and school supplies – and even families undergoing financial difficulties invested in this expense (Walker 1991: 301–3). Mexicans relied on these foreign institutions because domestic politics precluded Jesuits, their traditional educators, from operating in Mexico between 1767 and 1874. Even when Jesuit colleges gradually reopened over the 1870s, these were unsuited for the elite (Estrada 1903: 225–31). Mexicans sent their children to institutions like Stonyhurst, St Mary of Oscott,

and St Stanislas (Beaumont), and from there to Oxford, Cambridge, Louvain, the Sorbonne, or the Pontifical Academy for Noble Ecclesiastics. For most Mexicans, Stonyhurst was a finishing school that taught them to manage their affairs, polished their English, developed social skills and a familiarity with foreign institutions, laws, and customs. The pattern was established during the early 1800s, shortly before Mexico's independence, and it signalled an acknowledgment of Spain's changing fortunes. Only the wealthy and powerful could send their children in the 1820s–1850s, a period of instability when Mexico shed its economic ties with Spain. In correspondence with her boys at Stonyhurst in the 1830s, the III marquesa de Vivanco stressed the importance of their studies to the family's future and their personal success.² Their replies informed the family of the boys' progress, but also conveyed a sense of the Victorian quotidian. They shared their everyday experiences, games they played, and commented on perceived cultural differences.

Extended families sent cohorts of four to seven cousins to Great Britain to complete their education in the mid-nineteenth century. This may have eased younger children's separation anxiety but enrolling in groups of two or more also gave the families discounts of 25 per cent in school fees.³ Arriving two or three months prior to the beginning of the school term, they travelled about the continent accompanied by family members who often remained in Paris or Madrid for some years, particularly during the Liberal–Conservative civil wars of the 1850s and 1860s. Travel often coincided with the world's fairs (Rivera 1920: 14, Payno 1853). From the late 1870s until the mid 1910s, the number of Mexicans at Stonyhurst boomed to as many as a dozen annually. About one-fourth of students came from titled families who routinely travelled from the Americas to Europe, where some families owned residences, country estates, or seaside villas (Macías-González 2011).

For some, the choice of British schools reflected family origins. The Amor-Barrón-Escandón extended family – descended in part from Irish gentry exiled to Spain – sent some 38 students to Stonyhurst between 1800 and 1920. Eustaquio Barrón y Cantillón (Cádiz 1790–Mexico City 1859) son of Stradbally (Waterford) native Eustace Powers Barron, attended Stonyhurst in 1805–06. His siblings, Eustaquio, Miguel, and Guillermo, enrolled between 1809 and 1813. Barrón y Cantillón established himself in business in Acapulco and San Blás in the final decade of Spanish rule, building the Barron-Forbes interests with his Stonyhurst classmate, William Forbes (López-Portillo y Lancaster-Jones 1993: 37–49, Pérez-Rayón Elizundia 1995). Eustaquio was British consul in San Blás – and after 1849, in California. His sons Eustaquio, Jr, Francisco, Vicente, Guillermo, and Alberto also attended Stonyhurst, as did his daughter Catalina's boys, Pablo, Manuel, and Eustaquio Escandón. The Escandóns' father was also an old boy, having attended in 1837–41. Approximately one-third of Mexican students came from families with a tradition of attending Stonyhurst, like the Amor-Barrón-Escandón clan.

Gender practices and spatial dynamics complicated Stonyhurst as a contact zone. The school introduced homosocial practices, removing them from quotidian contact with women of their own social class. The two dozen women servants rarely stepped outside the kitchen, laundry, or infirmary where they laboured. Students lived among men, interacting solely with clerics, instructors, the occasional visitor, and male servants. For pubescent boys, the older youths – the rhetoricians and the

philosophers – were a wondrous sight, their bodies muscled, their chins bearded, and their voices deep and grave. The philosophers – who took their meals apart at a place of honour – were models of masculinity. Uniform-exempt, they dressed in swank clothes that manifested their incipient manhood (Fitzgerald 1894: 59). By observing how these different men related to each other, the Mexican students learned to survive and pay their dues in a homosocial society replicated in the Church, the armed forces, banking, commerce, bureaucracy, the club, and diplomacy. Becoming a ‘gentleman’ defined their gender expression. They also were among the first Mexicans exposed to British ideas of Christian athleticism, and subsequently played an important role in transmitting sportsmanship and gendered practices to Mexico.

THE STONYHURST EXPERIENCE

Located five miles southwest of Clitheroe, Lancashire, Stonyhurst was the oldest Jesuit institution in Britain. Housed in a fourteenth-century towered manor house, Stonyhurst embodied the Mexican aristocracy’s ideals of stability and exclusivity. Its stained glass windows featured the armorial bearings of alumni like the Amor and Escandón families, and those of the archbishop of Oaxaca (Amor e Yturbe 1996, Romero de Terreros y Vinent 1929: 53–59, Muir 1992, Gruggen and Keating 1901). Facilities included a 50,000-tome library, a museum of natural history, and an astronomical observatory (Serrano 1860: 186, Anonymous 1878). Founded in 1794, by 1900 it had over 500 pupils (Roberts 1996: 221–24). Most arrived at age nine or ten, remaining up to seven or eight years, although half of the Mexicans attended two years or less, often transferring elsewhere. Mexicans were not the only Hispanics at Stonyhurst. Between 1805 and 1920, dozens of Peruvians and Spaniards, and over 200 Argentines, Uruguayans, and Chileans attended.

Stonyhurst offered students two plans of study: the Ordinary School Course (equivalent to secondary and preparatory school in Mexico) and the Course of Philosophy (roughly equivalent to the first two years of an undergraduate programme). The first took seven years to complete and prepared pupils for matriculation at the University of London, the Oxford and Cambridge lower certificate, Oxford’s *responsions* (Cambridge’s ‘previous examinations’), and for the British Army and Civil Service examinations. Though few continued to Stonyhurst’s rigorous philosophy course, aristocratic Mexicans were especially drawn to it. The cohort of some 25 ‘gentlemen philosophers’, mostly in their late teens and early twenties, enjoyed perquisites like private quarters, separate sports facilities, fencing and dancing lessons, theatrical evenings, and an elaborate social life (Sire 1988). Philosophers enjoyed autonomy, meting out discipline through the ‘Captain’ system Thomas Arnold developed at Rugby, electing class officers, hiring servants, and overseeing a budget for expenses in the common rooms funded with fines for breaches of conduct (Rodríguez 2003: 744–54).⁴ They organized an annual field trip, social events, and sports matches with rival public schools. Such activities prepared youths for adulthood, instilling important lessons about competition, self-reliance, and civic responsibility (Tosh 2007: 105, 177). Philosophers kitted themselves out for the school year, incurring substantial expenses to

furnish and decorate their rooms. They purchased beds, linens, tables, wardrobes, chairs, lamps, rugs, and other accoutrements (Sire 1988: 117–18). After Stonyhurst, some became accomplished decorators, developing skills that they used to commission new homes in Mexico City's growing suburbs.

Students accumulated experience organizing social and cultural events, from a working knowledge of the British stage and musical culture, to myriad details of hosting and organizing hunts, musical evenings, and excursions that subsequently proved to be a boon to their roles as promoters of investment in Mexico. The Escandón brothers, Manuel and Pablo, put these lessons to great use. Returning to Mexico in the 1880s, they organized subscription balls, spruced up the Jockey Club, and lent *élan* to diplomatic receptions. They instituted entertainment and house management standards modelled after those of British classmates' houses. They organized presidential hunts and special outings for visiting VIPs, and Pablo, upon entering the dictator's staff, introduced a rigorous etiquette, renovated the presidential stables and carriages, and oversaw official receptions and state dinners (Escandón 1938: 61–71, 88, Amor e Yturbe 1996: 20–44). The organizational skills and cultural capital developed at Stonyhurst – augmented with society life in Paris and London after graduation – facilitated their success in Mexico.

Sports formed an important part of the Stonyhurst experience. Team sports, especially rugby and soccer, brought Stonyhurst into contact with the rituals and trappings of Protestant public school athleticism (Mangan 2000: 66, Fitzgerald 1894: 155–56). By 1899, Stonyhurst joined the athletic conference of public schools (Roberts 1996: 192). Sports developed youths' bodies, fostered better health, and gave them endurance. Other activities included county set favourites like hunting, fishing, and riding, which appealed to Mexicans because they strengthened social ties, brought together friends and cousins, reconnected them to an ancestral estate, its staff, and locale, and reinforced seigniorial duties. Hunts affirmed community on their estates, as they were incorporated into ritual calendars (the day of the estate's titular patron saint or to mark rites of passage and dates of anniversary in the life of the landowner's household). Hunting formed part of the ritualized gift and service exchange of the hacienda's moral economy (providing gifts of game animals to their employees) and honed the skills of the *hacendado* and his staff (breeding horses, trapping game, controlling predators) while teaching them to cooperate and work together (Nickel 1989: 15–39, Blázquez 1868: 291–303). Hunting enhanced social hierarchy and buttressed an elite masculinity many deemed *effete*. Hunts brought together networks of friends and structured narratives of intimate camaraderie and masculinity. Through hunting, elite Mexicans affirmed and assumed a racist and cultural kinship with white imperialists seeking big game trophies in Africa or Asia, and regarded shoots as a demonstration of European mastery over local populations and exotic beasts (Mangan and McKenzie 2008: 1132–67).

More important than the coursework were the rituals, dispositions, cues, and interpersonal dynamics students learned at Stonyhurst outside the classroom. Students learned how to interrelate, mastering the silent cues and jargon students used among themselves. Exchanges of gifts, friendships, alliances – and the corresponding invitations to accompany a classmate on a visit home during the holiday

were more significant. Whether at sports matches, debates, a play or musical evening, students received lessons about the correct way to spar without confrontations, or to arrive at consensus with a minimal loss of face. Proper discourse was not just a matter of obtaining a technical competency in vocabulary, syntax, and grammar – but deploying all the complexities of language to achieve a desired effect (Bourdieu 1991: 37–42, 104–26).

THE INFORMAL COLONIAL OTHER: LANGUAGE AND RACE

At Stonyhurst, Mexicans learned English and confronted complex racial and cultural politics. For all their wealth and their families' European origins, Stonyhurst's Mexicans received the brunt of Victorian racial taxonomies that perceived them as morally weak, racially degenerate and as a source of anxiety. Their identity as foreigners, accents, limited English skills upon arrival, and exotic provenance racialized them as non-whites. Perceived as interlopers at best, and little different from colonial others, they proved crucial to Stonyhurst's mission as a training ground for empire, prompting curiosity about the world beyond. The campus developed procedures to facilitate their integration and success, from arranging for language instruction to making allowances for students unable to voyage home in the time allotted for holidays. International students accounted for nearly 10 per cent of the school's population by 1891 (Anonymous 1891: 696). Foreigners' presence confirmed the superiority of British students, giving them a civilizing mission, akin to that which Catherine Hall observed in Birmingham, acculturating, polishing, and preparing Mexicans who would one day return home to rule and legislate (Hall 2002).

Mexican 'old boys' were renowned for their English. In nineteenth-century Mexico, a second European language was a marker of upward mobility at a time when large segments of the rural population barely knew Spanish. French or English opened up opportunities, but English could only be mastered through immersion and long residence abroad. Diplomat José Manuel Hidalgo (1826–96) complained that the British demanded foreigners pronounce English perfectly in order to engage them: '(they) refuse to understand unless one speaks to them correctly . . . the pronunciation is most difficult, and at times it is hard to understand them since they elide and contract half the syllables' (Hidalgo y Esnaurrizar 1887: 206). By the 1880s and 1890s, English became more commonplace, but Mexicans favoured the British 'Received Pronunciation' (RP), preferring it to the loud, elided, nasal American accent that lacked the voice of culture, authority, and power.⁵ American diplomatic agents and entrepreneurs who encountered the posh-sounding Anglophile Mexicans may have been perplexed to make sense of how they had acquired such accents. When encountering non-native speakers of English, US native speakers perceive them as less intelligent, using the slower 'foreigner talk' – exaggerated intonation and loud volume. They must have been surprised to see non-native English speakers adeptly deploying prestige accents and social cues, prompting reverse linguistic stereotyping that resulted in a positive perception (Lippi Green 1997, Gallois, Ogay and Giles 2005, Edwards 1999, Gluszek and Dovidio 2010).

Acquisition of spoken and written English accorded Mexicans cultural competency. Some arrived with a limited knowledge of English; their learning curve was steep. The school incorporated them into as many activities as possible, and even when their English was limited, they were assigned non-verbal roles in plays (Fitzgerald 1894: 401). Their progress was celebrated; by spring 1910, Pablo Martínez del Río became an accomplished public speaker. *Stonyhurst Magazine* observed, ‘he has a good command of language, a distinct and pleasing enunciation’ (1910, vol. 12, no. 171: 50).

While at Stonyhurst, Mexican students were frequently struck with Britons’ ignorance of Mexico. Aghast to discover Mexico’s reputation as a backward land of outlaws, they consciously became propagandists, writing about Mexico in their assignments, or the articles they published in *Stonyhurst Magazine*. Coverage of Mexico also included extracts from alumni letters and students’ correspondence to favourite teachers describing conditions in Mexico. The magazine also reviewed books on Mexican topics. Contributors included Joaquín Amor, Pablo Martínez del Río, Camilo Palomo y Rincón Gallardo, Rogelio Castielló y Fernández del Valle, and Manuel Romero de Terreros y Vinent, marqués de San Francisco, who wrote on topics as diverse as Mexican Catholicism, politics, arts, history, travel conditions, the country’s development under Díaz, as well as sporting events and hunts. Joaquín Amor’s articles in the 1880s heralded the rapid period of development under General Díaz. Writing under the alias of ‘Antiquus’, Amor praised the rural constabulary and described country leisure (1882: 79–81, 1885: 86–89). Special praise was given to railways, with frequent comparisons to Great Britain, explaining that the vast territory and difficult terrain made Mexican industrialization and development difficult, but not impossible (Amor 1883: 221).

Stonyhurst’s authorities struggled to accept the suspect moral and hybrid racial identity of their Mexican students. Initially, little was made of Mexicans’ perceived difference, and they were generally referred to as ‘Spaniards’. Hispanic names were Latinized or Anglicized; Francisco Luis became *Francis Aloysius*, *Ignatius* replaced Ignacio, and Santiago became *James*. Surnames were similarly mangled, as the Jesuits only recorded the last part of family names that consisted of two or more parts. Stonyhurst sought out Hispanics, making accommodations like publishing recruitment materials in Spanish and appointing a Spanish-speaking chaplain to look after their spiritual needs. At least one Spanish-language prospectus ca. 1839–41 suggests that until mid century, Stonyhurst was flexible on students’ ability to speak English.⁶ However, by the 1870s, an improved economic situation, a larger endowment, and rental income allowed Stonyhurst to become more selective of its foreigners. In 1898 prospective Hispanic students aged 12 years or older, were notified via the Conference of Catholic Schools, British consulates, and bishops to refrain from applying, owing to the limited spaces available, and to the moral detriment headmasters felt they posed. Adolescent Hispanics were regarded as morally, socially, and racially suspect: ‘A Latin-American boy of twelve is . . . the equivalent of an English lad of sixteen or seventeen or even more’. They claimed that sexually precocious Latins were insubordinate and prone to escapades ‘too frequently a source of great difficulty and embarrassment to our schools’. Only by arriving at a tender age – between seven and nine – could the graft of British morality, honour, and discipline take: ‘[they] can [become] youths and men of no

less excellent character and moral fibre than . . . English boys'. They were potential sources of contamination that had to be contained. Older boys posed a danger to themselves and others if they took up with Protestant women, producing morally and racially suspect children.⁷

From the 1880s on school records ceased anglicizing Mexicans' names, taking greater care to be culturally sensitive. Officials noted the phonetic pronunciation of names, and carefully recorded their complicated family names. They also listed the name of their parents, not only those of their legal guardians.⁸ Despite these adjustments, some members of the student body occasionally abused Mexicans; the swarthy received the brunt of racist pranks. While many elite Mexicans had the light complexion of their Spanish ancestors, the olive-toned were often called 'dagos' or worse (Iturbe 1996, Amor y Schmittlein 1996). For privileged individuals, this experience forced them to come to terms with their identity. Some embraced their *mexicanidad* (Mexican-ness), notably grasping at its European roots, Hispanicizing themselves – thanks to friendships with grandees at Stonyhurst.

Stonyhurst contacts introduced Mexicans and their families into the marriage markets of European capitals. Spanish aristocrats attending Stonyhurst befriended Mexicans and frequently invited them to accompany them home on holiday. On these visits, they introduced Mexicans to continental social circles, allowing them to become part of the smart set in Madrid, Paris, and London. Members of the Amor-Barrón-Escandón clan were particularly successful. Manuel Escandón wed Petronila de Salamanca y Hurtado de Saldivar, V marquesa de Villavieja, daughter of the Madrilenian real estate tycoon I marqués de Salamanca. Manuel's sister, Carlota Escandón, married his classmate at Stonyhurst, Felipe Juan Falcó y Ossorio, VIII duque de Montellano, IX marqués de Castelmocayo, Grande de España. Fanny Barrón became Countess Charles de Fitz James, Constance Barrón married Thomas Baring (head of the Baring Brothers interests), and Agnes Barrón wed the Russian Baron de Stoeckl (Escandón y Barrón 1938: 96–113, Barrón y Lunergan 1952: 21–24). Others married into the British peerage and gentry; Guillermo de Landa y Osío (1898–1965) and his sister María de la Luz (1893–1969) respectively wed the Pelham-Burns and the Arthbutnot-Leslies.

Upon returning to Mexico, some experienced alienation and displacement, perhaps developing a 'nomadic consciousness' or an 'exile identity' in their movement and transition between two cultures and two languages (Kaminski 1999: xiii–xvii). They were marked by displacement and hybridity of origin and cultural practices, belonging neither to Europe nor to Latin America as their experience of travel – and exile – dislocated them, placing them in the 'transnational intermediate zone' that bridged metropole and indigenous colonial, akin to British bureaucrats and missionaries in the Raj (Buettner 2004: 2–5, Sinha 2001).

Stonyhurst's Mexican 'Old Boys' returned to Mexico adjusted to British ways. Manuel de Escandón y Barrón, IV marqués de Villavieja, observed in his memoirs that after spending the majority of his childhood and youth in Europe, his return to Mexico in 1878 left him feeling displaced. He remarked feeling 'a stranger, and everything that really belonged to my innermost self seemed somehow to have been left behind in Europe' (Escandón y Barrón 1938: 60). Having spent most of his childhood in France and Spain, he knew Europe better than Mexico, where,

between 1861 and 1878, he had only lived for three years under the instruction of a French tutor. Villavieja later remarked that he ‘found it only natural to develop a liking for everything English . . . we felt ourselves to be more English than Mexican’ (Escandón y Barrón 1938: 45).

For Villavieja, strenuous physical activities mediated the process of ‘becoming’ English, strongly predisposing him to sports as a way of finding acceptance. Feeling bored and ineffective in his studies, he threw himself at the sporting life, becoming captain of the soccer team, and later, becoming one of the first cricket 11. By 1874, he was captain of the philosophers’ cricket team. After graduation, Villavieja used sports – especially old boys from the Spanish aristocracy (the Dukes of Medinaceli, Tamames, and Sotomayor) – to gain access to society. Villavieja became a great enthusiast of hunting, horse racing, and polo. He organized a number of polo clubs, and participated with brothers Pablo and Eustaquio, earning Mexico’s first Olympic medal at the 1900 Paris Olympiad. His sports fame brought him to the attention of Alfonso XIII, and he became a fixture at the royal court. He helped organize the royal family’s goodwill tours of the United States, Europe, and Latin America (Escandón 1938).

CONCLUSIONS

The Stonyhurst experience strongly influenced the lifestyle, career choice, and personal identity of its Mexican students. Their preference for British mores marked them for life. As adults, these individuals played an important role as cultural brokers, playing an important role in ‘informal empire’, as counterparts of British agents of informal empire. Their stories show that the relationship some have regarded as one-sided was much more complex; Stonyhurst-educated Mexicans transferred knowledge, practices, and experiences to Mexico from Victorian Britain, adapting them for local needs and circumstances.

The Stonyhurst experience affected them greatly. Their childhood experience as outsiders transformed them, prompting contrasting reactions. Some, like Villavieja, made important contributions to their country, but felt more at ease in Europe, where they married and led most of their lives. Their identity was complex. They straddled a complex racial and class position, at once privileged as nominally white Mexicans, but also subaltern as non-Britons.

Their education opened up career opportunities in Mexico’s diplomatic corps, high finance, industry and government. The opening vignette reviews the success of Col. Escandón y Barrón’s role as the Mexican Lord Curzon – a crafter of state pageantry – predicated on his experiences at Stonyhurst. Born in 1857, brought up in Europe and educated for eight years at Stonyhurst alongside his two brothers Manuel and Eustaquio, Pablo returned to Mexico in late 1878 after his father’s death. As head of the family, he managed over £750,000 in property, stock, and cash, including sums deposited with London firms: £263,000 at Baring Brothers and £171,000 at Antony Gibbs and Sons (Pérez-Rayón Elizundia 1995: 77). After his mother’s death, Pablo shared guardianship of his siblings with his brother Manuel, overseeing their education and matching them up with Stonyhurst chums. Most of the Escandóns spent much of the 1880s and 1890s in Europe, but Pablo

remained in Mexico, marrying Catalina Cuevas y Rubio, daughter of a prominent family, in 1882 (Ortega y Pérez Gallardo 1902: 232–34). Pablo's English skills made him a frequent guest at the American Embassy, where the Escandóns met prominent visitors and investors. The Escandóns were close friends of Sir Spenser St. John (1825–1910), the British envoy, to whom they rented a home at 15 Puente de Alvarado in the 1890s (Pérez-Rayón Elizundia 1995: 270). The Escandóns became close to President Díaz as early as the 1880s, hosting elegant soirees in his honour in the 1890s – including a £5,000 ball celebrating Díaz's fourth re-election in 1892 at which Pablo debuted the president's staff's new uniforms (Pérez-Rayón Elizundia 1995: 218).

The Escandóns were the darlings of society on both sides of the Atlantic. They purchased a number of residences in Europe in the 1870s and 1880s, taking advantage of favourable exchange rates. They owned *hôtels particuliers* in Paris (where the Baron Rothschild was a neighbour), rented houses in London, and invested over 2.5 million francs to purchase and maintain Château Coubert – a 1,000 acre hunting lodge – where they hosted friends and family. The Escandóns' education, family connections and wealth made them ideal choices for Díaz's diplomatic efforts. Pablo, as the eldest, put the country's best foot forward with international visitors. Manuel was Díaz's informal envoy to Spain where he enjoyed access to King Alfonso XIII. In Paris, Eustaquio was attaché at the Mexican Legation from 1894 to 1910. In London, cousin Captain Alfred Barrón was first secretary of the Mexican Legation.

The investment holdings and general attitude towards industry among Stonyhurst-educated Mexicans reflected patterns found among the British aristocracy in the late Victorian age. Wiener (2004) and Cannadine (1990) have argued that the public school experience instilled a sense of tradition and a disdain for industry – and especially for trade – from the British upper crust. These views led some to concentrate their holdings in the financial, energy, and agricultural sectors. The Amor-Barrón-Escandón clan seems to have replicated this Victorian pattern in Porfirian Mexico. Pablo Escandón, for example, divested himself of inherited railroad interests in Mexico, transferring his wealth into mining, petroleum, public utilities, and real estate. After selling their £134,000 stake in the Cocolapam Textile Mill in 1900, the Escandóns invested £600,000 in sugar haciendas in Morelos and over £100,000 in Veracruz coffee plantations. Real estate investments earned important dividends; the sale of the Hacienda de la Condesa in 1900 produced a profit of £200,000 and a property sold in 1906 fetched over £130,000. The presence of Escandóns on company boards was a guarantee of solidity to British financial circles. Pablo Escandón, for example, sat on the board of the Mexican Central and the Federal District Urban Railway Companies, the Puebla Electric Power and the Condesa Development Companies, the Banco Nacional de México, and on the boards of three mining companies (Pérez-Rayón Elizundia 1995: 87–163).

Like the Escandóns, many Stonyhurst old boys returned to Mexico to take up important posts in government, enterprise, culture, and the arts. Eduardo Rincón Gallardo y Rosso (1848–1906, St 1865–66), III marqués de Guadalupe Gallardo (as well as II duque de Regla, Grande de España) was Mexico City mayor and

sat in the Senate until his death in 1906 (Zayas 1945: 225–37). Pablo Martínez del Río y Vinent (1892–1963, St 1906–11) helped establish the National Institute of Anthropology and History and developed the National University’s infrastructure for international education. Manuel Romero de Terreros y Vinent (1880–1968, St 1891–99), IV marqués de San Francisco, occupied positions at museums and universities under post-revolutionary governments, becoming the dean of colonial art history studies in the first half of the twentieth century (Díaz y de Ovando 1969). Justo Fernández del Valle (1895–1959, St 1905–13) watched over his family’s industrial and real estate interests in Western Mexico and established a prominent legal firm in post-Revolutionary Mexico. For Jaime Castiello y Fernández del Valle (1899–1937, St 1908–17), the confessional schooling experience fostered a religious vocation in a teaching order, where he implemented practices observed firsthand in Stonyhurst (Ortíz Monasterio 1956: 65). Stonyhurst became a formative experience that characterized Mexico’s mandarinates, its influence permeating throughout the posts ‘old boys’ occupied.

While not all old boys returned to Mexico after Stonyhurst – some established themselves in France and Spain permanently – their Stonyhurst connection enabled them to work on behalf of Mexico. Although Francisco Xavier de Bermejillo y Schmidtlein (1889–1954, St 1907–12), II marqués de Bermejillo del Rey, occupied important posts in the Spanish diplomatic service, he was an important investor in real estate and industry in Mexico. Jorge Gómez de Parada (1885–1965, Beaumont 1898–1903, St 1903–05) resided in Europe until the 1930s, representing Mexico in the International Olympic Committee from 1924 to 1927.

Attendance at Stonyhurst became a family tradition that reinforced class identity as gentlemen scholars, sportsmen, and diplomats. The older brothers, cousins, fathers, uncles, and even grandfathers of boys of the Amor-Barrón-Escandón and Martínez del Río clans had attended Stonyhurst since the early 1800s. Thus, by the late Porfiriato, the foreign educational experience had come to play an important part in many aristocratic families’ socialization, which provided a common experiential base across the generational divide of the family’s male line. Schools like Stonyhurst became integral to the art of learning to behave as members of a family and a social class, the latter being part of a transnational process bringing members of the Mexican aristocracy into close contact with the gentry of the transatlantic world, teaching them to engage and confront informal empire.

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NOTES

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- 5 Mexican historical sociolinguists suggest that nineteenth-century ‘purists’ regarded metropolitan European accents as the prestige dialect of languages spoken in the Americas (Barriga Villanueva and Butragueño 2010).
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CHAPTER FORTY

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD OF AMERICAN HISTORY

—♦—
Daniel W. Howe

From 10 May to 10 November 1876, the United States celebrated the centennial of its independence with a giant international exposition in Philadelphia, the city where that independence had been declared 100 years earlier. Countries from all over the world contributed exhibits, even Japan, which had only been open to American trade since 1854. The British exhibit boasted several large buildings constructed in the half-timbered Tudor Revival style and displayed, among other technological innovations, the ‘penny-farthing’ bicycle. But the chief purpose of the exhibition was to showcase the host country’s own progress in ‘Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mind’. Among the examples of technological progress on display were the telephone, newly invented in the United States by the Scotsman Alexander Graham Bell, the typewriter, and an ‘electric dynamo’ that would prove a precursor of incandescent lighting. The exposition deliberately ignored one very important kind of recent progress: the abolition of slavery and the granting of civil rights to black Americans by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. Despite protests from African Americans, the exposition’s organizers accorded a higher priority to cultivating the goodwill of white southerners, hoping to revive their patriotic identification with an American Union they had had to be kept in by force less than a dozen years earlier. During its six-month life, the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876 attracted over ten million visitors. As the London Crystal Palace in 1851 has been used to provide a window on Victorian Britain, so the exhibition in Philadelphia can provide one on Victorian America (Gilberti 2002 is a work on the exposition of 1876 by a historian of architecture).

A widely distributed complex image entitled the ‘Centennial Mirror’, manufactured using the currently popular lithographic technique called oleography, promoted and illustrated the Philadelphia Exposition. The Centennial Mirror presented contrasting images of America in 1776 and 1876, pairing the signing of the Declaration of Independence with a panorama of the Centennial Exposition. Many of the pairings contrasted technology: a wagon with the railroad, a spinning wheel with a mill loom, a sickle with a horse-drawn reaper, a sailing vessel with a steamship. The fat cattle and swine of 1876 are compared with their scrawny



Figure 40.1 *Centennial Mirror, 1776–1876.*
Lithograph by American Olegraph Co., 1876

precursors, a one-room log schoolhouse with a four-story high school, a woman playing a harp with a woman playing a nineteenth-century pianoforte (Library of Congress no date).

Most interesting for our purposes are the pictures contrasting the lives of women and children at the time of independence with a century later. The heroic patriot Molly Pitcher loads a cannon at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, while 100 years afterwards, well-dressed gentlewomen sit, safely and peacefully, in a well-appointed parlour. Today, we might well construe this as an anti-feminist narrative, but to the Victorian mind, it represented progress in the status of women. And indeed the improvement was not wholly imaginary, for the women in the parlour are reading books, reflecting significant strides in the provision of secondary and higher education for women during the century in question. A central pair of pictures in the Centennial Mirror each depict a little boy with his father, who is teaching him how to read. In the image attributed to the eighteenth century, the bewigged father holds a bundle of switches to threaten the child, who struggles to make out the words in his primer. In dramatic contrast, the bearded modern father holds his child's hand and provides him positive encouragement. The boy, instead of peering anxiously at his book, looks upward toward his father. The first image

portrays an authoritarian pedagogy, the second an inspirational one. Though we may think of the Victorian age as a repressive one, the Centennial Mirror congratulates its audience on a more humane concept of child rearing.

Like the Philadelphia Exposition it was meant to publicize, the Centennial Mirror reflected the attitudes and values of Victorian culture in the United States. At the centre of the American Victorian worldview was faith in progress, exemplified most clearly by technological inventions but extending also to human institutions and society, which were interpreted as becoming steadily more enlightened and humane. The Centennial Mirror was almost entirely secular, although it did pair a simple colonial meetinghouse with a large Gothic Revival church. But often, American opinion makers of this period synthesized their Enlightenment faith in progress not only with patriotic belief in their country's 'Manifest Destiny', but also with millennial Protestant Christianity. Here, for example, is how a popular women's magazine of 1850 celebrated the consequences of the recently invented electric telegraph:

This noble invention [the telegraph] is to be the means of extending civilization, republicanism, and Christianity over the earth. It must and will be extended to nations half-civilized, and thence to those now savage and barbarous. Our government will be the grand center of this mighty influence. . . . The beneficial and harmonious operation of our institutions will be seen, and similar ones adopted. Christianity must speedily follow them, and we shall behold the grand spectacle of a whole world, civilized, republican, and Christian. . . . Wars will cease from the earth. Men 'shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks'. . . . Then shall come to pass the millennium.

(Anon. 1850, quoted in Moorhead 1978: 6)

The naive optimism, the confidence that technical progress would create moral progress, and the arrogant assumptions about America's role in human history, all evident in this text, have never entirely disappeared from the American outlook. They were, however, particularly evident in the period from the 1820s to the end of the nineteenth century, which can usefully be denominated 'Victorian'. It was an era characterized in the United States by industrialization, urbanization, the growth of the literate middle class, revolutionary innovations in transportation and communications, the development of party politics, and vast westward expansion. In all these respects the history of the United States resembled that of Great Britain in the same period. Indeed, in most of these respects Americans were conscious of following the British example. And although Americans have been reluctant to admit it, their westward expansion was a form of imperialism, analogous to Britain's overseas empire building. Both were popular with their respective peoples as guarantees of opportunity.

There are, of course, other ways of defining and naming the periods of US history across the nineteenth century. A familiar one is the 'Jacksonian period', beginning either with Andrew Jackson's first run at the presidency in 1824 or his inauguration in 1829. The end of the Jacksonian period is vaguely located by those who use it somewhere in the '1840s and 1850s', as slavery expansion superseded banking, the tariff, and internal improvements as the dominant political issue

(Wilentz 2005: 791). The shortcomings of the term and its variations ('Jacksonian America', 'Jacksonian Democracy') have become increasingly evident in recent historiography. The expression may seem to imply that all Americans identified themselves as Jacksonians, although in fact Andrew Jackson was a controversial and divisive figure in his day. 'Jacksonian Democracy' has become an ironic term, in light of the pro-slavery politics of Andrew Jackson and his partisans and their enthusiastic support for what they called 'Indian Removal', that is, the expulsion of Native Americans from east of the Mississippi River. The term 'Jacksonian America' may seem to imply that Andrew Jackson was a representative American of his time by virtue of being a self-made man of the frontier. This perpetuates the historiography associated with Frederick Jackson Turner's famous article, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', published in 1893. The frontier thesis has been refuted many times, and ignores the many sorts of Americans who were not men of the frontier like Jackson, such as women, blacks, Indians, Hispanics, city dwellers, sailors, writers, social reformers, factory workers or owners, recent immigrants, and members of the Whig, Antimasonic, and Nativist political parties – many of whom actually opposed Jackson politically. Because it creates a misleading image of political consensus among Americans of that era, I have gone on record as opposing the use of the term 'Jacksonian period' (Howe 2007: 4).

Another name sometimes used for a portion of nineteenth-century American history is 'The Gilded Age', referring to the period from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the Panic of 1893. The term derives from a novel of that name by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, published in 1873. The title was intended to mock what its authors believed was the superficiality and hypocrisy of their time, and the name usually retains a pejorative connotation. It is chiefly used with reference to the economic history of the time, the development of the corporate form of business organization, the rise of the ostentatious super-rich, the emergence of an urban upper middle class of prestige-conscious business managers and professionals, and the development of an industrial proletariat. The associations of the term have usually not included such features of the time as black civil rights (the focus of Reconstruction in the South), white settlement in the West and the corresponding destruction of the Plains Indians, swelling immigration and the reactions against it, as well as the occasional reforms of the time, such as the Pendleton Civil Service Reform of 1883, the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, and the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. To be sure, Charles Calhoun has incorporated all of these aspects in his fine anthology of essays entitled *The Gilded Age* (Calhoun 2007). The Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and its organ, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, founded in 2002, have commendably tried to free the term 'Gilded Age' from its origins and associations; in my opinion they have not entirely succeeded. With respect, I wish they could find another name. Thomas Schlereth has proposed a different name in his book, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1875–1915*. Much as I respect Schlereth's book, I prefer to use 'Victorian' for the significantly different, if overlapping, period that coincides with the way the term is used by historians of the rest of the English-speaking world (Schlereth 1991).

The most common form of periodization in nineteenth-century US history is division at the Civil War of 1861–65. More Americans died in the Civil War than in all the rest of the country's wars put together. When Americans refer to 'antebellum' and 'postbellum' times, they do not need to specify which war they are talking about. This schema does serve well for many purposes, such as separating the institution of slavery from emancipation and marking the triumph of the federal government over the sovereignty of the states. The inauguration of Lincoln as the first president of the modern Republican Party in 1861 commenced the 'third party system' in politics, that is, the present competition between Democrats and Republicans, following the first party system of Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans, and the second party system of Jacksonian Democrats and Whigs. Nevertheless, the antebellum/postbellum division has been subject to adjustment in recent years, with many textbooks making 1877 (the end of postwar Reconstruction in the South) rather than the Civil War itself their dividing line.

What is there to be said for speaking of a 'Victorian era' in United States history? The term enables historians to treat the period from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth century as a unit, to discern and discuss trends in industrialization, knowledge explosion, urbanization, education, religion, literature and art, geographical expansion, race relations, and gender relations. From our vantage point, we see the Victorian era as an age of profound transition. At the close of the Napoleonic Wars, the United States was still something like what we call today a 'third-world' country, or, more politely, a 'developing' country. That is, it was predominantly agricultural, importing most of its industrial goods from overseas and paying for them with raw materials and agricultural staples. Most Americans lived on semi-subsistence farms, their lives dominated by the weather and the hours of daylight. Many people ate what they grew; many wives made the clothes for their family. Only people who lived along navigable waterways could easily market their crops and obtain cash to purchase items that were not produced locally, for which they could barter with a neighbour or a local storekeeper. On the other hand, by the end of the nineteenth century, the United States appeared among the leading industrial powers of the world, boasting a per capita income higher than any other country save Britain. Because of its continental size, improvements in transportation and communications were particularly important in the economic development of the United States. Landmarks along its economic transformation included the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the demonstration of Morse's electric telegraph in 1844, and the transcontinental railroad, connected in 1869. Orville Vernon Burton has chosen to call this period of American history, 1830–1900, 'the age of Lincoln' (Burton 2007).

Applying the name of a foreign monarch to a country's history implies some relationship between the two countries, and indeed an important one existed between the United States and Great Britain in the nineteenth century. Even after the United States became independent, the two countries remained in a close and symbiotic economic relationship. When the first intercity railroad connected Liverpool and Manchester in 1830, making use of the English workingman George Stephenson's invention of the steam locomotive, Americans made haste to import disassembled locomotives across the Atlantic and put them together again. Before long they were making their own. The locomotive proved even more important in

the United States than in its native Britain, because of the vastly greater distances. Peter J. Hugill's fine chapter in this collection on communications and transportation, 'The shrinking Victorian World', obviates the need for further discussion here of the transformative importance of the railroad and the telegraph on Britain and the United States, or of the parallels and contrasts between them. The Anglo-American economic relationship was most obvious and pervasive in the cotton industry. 'Whoever says industrialization, says cotton', in the words of the great economic historian Eric Hobsbawm (quoted in Dugan and Dugan 2000: n.19). A series of eighteenth-century inventions in the processing and weaving of raw cotton into textile opened the way for a gigantic nineteenth-century industry once the disruptions of international trade associated with the Napoleonic Wars came to an end. The great textile mills of Yorkshire and Lancashire were supplied by cotton imports from India, Egypt, and most of all, from the United States. By 1840, cotton constituted 59 per cent of US exports, and the value of the cotton sold overseas (principally to Britain) exceeded 71 million dollars. Britain also imported a great deal of American wheat, especially after Sir Robert Peel secured repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. (President James Knox Polk reciprocated by persuading Congress to lower the American tariff that same year.) These exports enabled the United States not only to pay for its imported manufactures and consumer products, but also to pay interest on its foreign debt and continue to import more capital (principally from Britain) to invest in transportation and industry. Much of Atlantic civilization in the nineteenth century was built on the back of the enslaved workers in the American cotton fields (North 1961: 75–76; see also Beckert 2004).

Nineteenth-century Britain and the United States had much in common besides the Industrial Revolution that so dramatically transformed both of them. Their cultural commonalities of language, law, representative government, and religion also include attitudes and values we term 'Victorian': didacticism, prudery, voluntarism and humanitarianism, respect for hard work, and faith in a divine national mission to redeem humankind. The dramatic improvements in communications during the Victorian years nurtured the cultural ties between the English-speaking countries. Improvements in printing and paper-making, faster and more frequent transatlantic crossings all played their parts in facilitating the distribution of information and ideas around the Atlantic World. Back in 1812 the United States had declared war on Great Britain *two days after* the British government had repealed the Orders in Council restricting American ocean commerce, which constituted the principal US grievance against Britain. Then in January 1815 a bloody battle had been fought at New Orleans *two weeks after* a treaty of peace had been signed between the United States and Britain at Ghent, in what we now call Belgium. To avoid future misunderstandings, a transatlantic cable was first laid in 1858. Queen Victoria and President Buchanan exchanged the first message: 'Europe and America are united by telegraph. Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men'. The new cable soon malfunctioned, and (as related in Hugill's essay) it was not successfully re-laid until after the American Civil War (Thistlethwaite 1959 is still remarkably valuable on this subject).

The communications revolution of the nineteenth century had diverse consequences of imponderable magnitude all over the world. It became valuable to both

the expanding continental empire of the United States and the far-flung British Empire. The autocratic government of the Russian tsar feared to introduce the telegraph, lest it facilitate the democratic distribution of ideas. (Just as the government of China today worries about the democratic implications of the internet.) And indeed the explosion of print and the increased ease with which printed media could be distributed did help transform the political life of English-speaking countries. When the Victorian era began, the United States was much more of a political democracy than Britain, but by the end of the era, both countries had officially committed to its practice, though the United States was backing away from the promise to include African Americans in its political community. When women's suffrage became uniform after the First World War, both finalized it around the same time. In both countries, the rise of the national press operated to shift politics from a competition among prominent local men to competition between nationwide parties with rival programmes. And in both of them, it encouraged a shift from basing political participation on property to basing it on literacy.

Ever since the Protestant Reformation, the principal motive for popular literacy had been religious – to enable people to read the Bible. Now, a secular motive for popular literacy appeared alongside the religious one: to cultivate an informed electorate. (In Britain, the chief theoretician of this shift was the philosopher John Stuart Mill; in America it was the educator Horace Mann.) The expansion of popular education and the expansion of the printed media – newspapers, magazines, and books – went hand in hand. They expanded faster in the United States than in Britain, as did the electoral franchise. In 1840 the US census asked questions about literacy for the first time. Even when the largely (and involuntarily) illiterate African-American population is included, the United States counted 22 per cent of adults as illiterate, a figure that compared favourably with the 41 per cent illiteracy revealed in England and Wales by the 1841 census (Howe 2002: 22). One must note that the secular rationale for literacy did not replace the religious one. In fact, one of the major beneficiaries of improved communications was the Anglo-American Evangelical Movement. The message that Samuel Morse sent in 1844 to demonstrate his telegraph, ‘What Hath God Wrought’ (from the Book of Numbers, [Chapter 23](#), Verse 23, KJV), typified a synthesis of science, technology, and Protestantism characteristic of the English-speaking world of its time. Before Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, only a few eccentrics believed there was any conflict between scientific and religious truth. (Of course, even afterwards, people like the great Harvard biologist Asa Gray synthesized the Theory of Evolution with Christianity.)

Protestant Christianity constituted a shared ideology for the great majority of people in Britain and the United States during the Victorian period. While England and Scotland had their respective established churches, in the United States each state was originally free to have one or not. The last state establishment, that of Massachusetts, was abolished in 1833. Thereafter the United States presented a giant free marketplace in religions. The ones long most successful in winning adherents were those England knew as Protestant Nonconformity: Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. Not until the late nineteenth century did Irish and German immigration put Roman Catholicism in first place, ahead of

Methodism. German ‘higher criticism’ of the Bible had remarkably little impact on either British or American opinion until very late in the century. Revelation and reason alike, the Anglo-American public was confident, led to knowledge of God and his creation. American college students studied the *Natural Theology* of the English archdeacon William Paley. Virtually everyone believed in the intelligent design of the universe. Even the avowed critics of organized religion, such as the transatlantic reformers Thomas Paine and Robert Owen, regarded the universe as a revelation of God’s existence – a more convincing revelation, indeed, than the confused myths in the Bible. Religious awakenings, expansion of education, interest in science, and technological progress all went hand in hand without a sense of contradiction. Having no national established church, American society was apparently more open to religious novelties like Mormonism and Christian Science, but both those American religions readily won converts in Britain.

Victorian literature, like education and science, was saturated with religious meanings and motivations. The novel appeared, a literary genre that responded to the new ability to manufacture long writings and distribute them widely via steamboats and railroads. Nineteenth-century authors took advantage of the improvements in communications technology to market their art and their moral values to larger and more widespread audiences than writers had ever enjoyed before. They also took advantage of the improvements in transportation; the Englishman Matthew Arnold and the American Ralph Waldo Emerson (to take but two prominent examples) toured each other’s countries on the lecture circuit. Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, Thomas Carlyle, Maria Edgeworth, and Felicia Hemans among many others enjoyed transatlantic literary audiences, although they seldom enjoyed transatlantic royalties, due to the absence of international copyright laws. The absence of international copyright made it harder for young American writers to get a hearing, since American publishers preferred to reprint the works of established English writers like Dickens (whom they did not have to pay royalties) rather than take a chance on Americans like Nathaniel Hawthorne, who would have a claim to royalties.

The two American Victorian authors most popular with the English public were the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1854), long, sentimental, and passionately anti-slavery, became the blockbusting bestseller of the entire nineteenth century, its popularity underscored not only by the sales of the book but also by its performance on stage by countless touring companies of actors, all over the English-speaking world. Longfellow’s poetry unashamedly affirmed middle-class Victorian values in poems like the ‘Psalm of Life’ (1838) and the ‘Village Blacksmith’ (1841). When my mother attended her local board school in Halifax, Yorkshire, before the First World War, she learned these and memorized them. After a long period out of favour with literary critics, this great spokesman for American Victorianism has at last found a champion: Christoph Irmscher (Irmscher 2006). Jonathan Rose’s superb chapter in this anthology renders unnecessary further discussion of transatlantic literary developments here.

Christian evangelists welcomed technological advances along with mass education as helping them spread the good news of Christ. English Dissenting sects enjoyed close relations with their American counterparts: Presbyterians, Congrega-

tionalists, Methodists, Unitarians, and Quakers probably had closer transatlantic ties than Anglicans or Roman Catholics. As George Whitefield had toured the American colonies in the eighteenth century, the American evangelist Charles G. Finney famously toured England and Wales in the nineteenth. A host of other visiting American revivalists, including Dwight Moody and Phoebe Palmer, followed Finney. Most of these travelling revivalists were lay persons with little if any formal theological education. Although they often embarrassed religious authorities, such itinerant evangelists helped nurture populist Protestantism in Victorian England (Carwardine 1978; Scotland 2009).

Closely related to the evangelical movement on both sides of the Atlantic was the proliferation of voluntary associations, many of which existed to promote particular social reforms. In the United States these included the American Peace Society, the American Temperance Society, the American Colonization Society (which imitated the model of its British counterpart in Sierra Leone by founding Liberia), and two rival abolitionist associations, the American Anti-Slavery Society (which admitted women to policy-making offices), and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (which did not). Other voluntary organizations worked for more specifically religious causes, such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Home Missionary Society, the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union, all of which encouraged widespread literacy. (The Tract Society celebrated the nineteenth-century revolution in communications with a poster showing an angel hovering over a printing press.)

In Victorian Britain, as Alex Tyrrell shows in his essay in this volume, voluntary associations provided a means to work for community goals without endorsing strong government. In America, on the other hand, voluntary associations often worked hand in hand with efforts to strengthen federal and state government, for example, to provide state education, subsidize ‘internal improvement’ transportation projects, or improve the postal service. In both countries, the voluntary associations nurtured a ‘public sphere’ of civic engagement and informed public opinion. The reform movements that English-speaking evangelicals supported – temperance, antislavery, Sunday Schools, and the rest – were transatlantic enterprises. The example of William Wilberforce inspired evangelical reformers on both sides of the ocean. After Parliament enacted compensated emancipation in the British Empire in 1833, the British antislavery movement turned its attention to slavery in other countries, particularly the United States. The English Unitarian Harriet Martineau and her Boston Unitarian friend Maria Weston Chapman fostered the development of a transatlantic network of antislavery women. British abolitionists like George Thompson visited the United States on anti-slavery speaking tours; American abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, toured Britain raising money. Black American abolitionists like Douglass felt joy and wonder when visiting Britain, upon finding that they were treated there with far more respect and consideration than they received in their supposedly democratic home country. Not surprisingly, their feelings spilled over into a warm regard for everything British, and they penned some of the most lavish examples of American Anglophilia (Tamarkin 2008).

The relationship between the United States and Britain in Victorian times was asymmetrical; that is, Americans were more conscious of their relationship to

Britain than the British were of their relationship to the United States. As the most advanced economy of the industrial revolution, Britain seemed an example in some respects, especially technological, yet a warning in others, such as the formation of an urban proletariat. In a time when the British Empire was the world's superpower, most Americans resented British condescension and feared British aims, even while many of them also hoped to replicate British industrialization, humanitarian reform, and literary accomplishments. Both Anglophilia and Anglophobia were common in the nineteenth-century United States, and they influenced politics, culture, and public opinion. Antebellum Anglophobia is the subject of a forthcoming book by Sam Haynes, tentatively entitled 'Unfinished Revolution: The American Republic in a British World, 1815–1850'. It will treat the cultural, literary, political, economic, and diplomatic aspects of his theme. It includes, for example, full accounts of the horrific violence Anglophobic mobs directed against British actors appearing in the United States, fostered by demagogic politicians. On the other hand, American Anglophilia, its most recent scholar Elisa Tamarkin points out, was a broadly based cultural phenomenon in the nineteenth century, not confined to a reactionary elite. It manifested itself in such varied ways as the writings of Washington Irving, John Trumbull's painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill, sentimental admiration for a British spy executed by George Washington, and popular fascination with Queen Victoria herself, as well as, of course, reforms espoused by humanitarians and educators.

Manifesting the insecurity common among postcolonial peoples, Americans struggled to define their independent nationhood. In literary culture, the British presence seemed overwhelming. Did America have a literature of its own? In 1820 Sydney Smith, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, taunted Americans with the question, 'In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?' This was the question Ralph Waldo Emerson was answering when he addressed the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Society in 1837 on 'The American Scholar' and laid out the agenda for the creation of a distinctively American literature. The dream was realized within a generation, with the great works of Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Whitman, Stowe, and Emerson himself. By 1855, when the Association of New York Publishers met in New York's Crystal Palace (just erected in imitation of the one in London), they could with perfect justification greet 153 of their most popular authors with the proud toast: 'To American Literature!' (Howe 2007: 636; Zboray 1993: 3).

The two major American political parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, were each ambivalent in their attitude toward America's most important economic and cultural trading partner. The Democrats favoured free trade, representing the viewpoint of the producers of agricultural staple exports – not only cotton but also tobacco. Yet the Democratic Party was also unambiguously proslavery and territorially expansionist. So while the Democrats were eager to cultivate trade ties with Britain, they also resented British humanitarian ambitions and regarded the British Empire as a geopolitical rival. The Democrats prevented the US government from reaching an accord to allow the Royal Navy to board suspected slave traders flying the Stars and Stripes. It was mostly Democrats who pressed for annexation of the entire Oregon Country, although it was a Democratic president who agreed on a compromise partition in 1846. The Democratic Party eagerly welcomed Irish

immigrants and catered to them with rhetorical Anglophobia. As for the Whig party and its successor the Republicans, their support for a protective tariff placed them in opposition to Britain's emerging policy of free trade. Yet the Whig and Republican parties were culturally sympathetic to Britain, shared the values we associate with Victorianism, and counted among their supporters many of the evangelicals and reformers with ties to counterparts in Britain. The leader of the Whig party, Henry Clay, endorsed a proposed international copyright law, but the Democrats, responding to the wishes of the American publishing industry rather than to the interests of American authors, blocked it.

As historians of the United States become more 'global' in their concerns and less provincial, the relationship of the United States to the British Empire in the nineteenth century should become all the more relevant. On the other hand, American historians may be reluctant to apply the term 'Victorian' equally to all people living in the United States during the 'Victorian era'. Native Americans, Hispanics, immigrants from East Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as most African Americans, may be thought to fall outside the parameters of Victorianism. Put another way, in America, Victorianism is usually associated with a particular ethno-religious group, which would conventionally be called Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, but more accurately, British-American Protestantism. The latter term takes account of the importance of Scottish, Welsh, and Scots-Irish contributions. The Scots-Irish were particularly important in Pennsylvania and the South. (The name 'Scots-Irish' is an invention of the late nineteenth century; before that such people simply called themselves Irish Protestants.) However, when 'Victorianism' is viewed in cultural terms, as a set of ideas and values, it can be seen to transcend, at least partially, conventional racial and ethnic divisions in the nineteenth-century United States.

When I wrote about Victorianism in America back in 1975, in an article for a special issue of the journal *American Quarterly*, Victorianism seemed to me a name for the culture of English-speaking people during their climactic era of industrialization. I pointed out that although that culture had an affinity for British-American Protestants, it was by no means necessarily confined to them, and that Americans in other social groups sometimes adopted it: middle-class African Americans are one good example. With regard to the conventional identification of American Victorian culture with Protestantism, it is important to note that it was not peculiar to orthodox evangelical Protestants but common to theologically liberal Protestants as well, and that many Catholics and Jews displayed aspects of Victorian culture. Victorian culture as I then defined it (and still would) had a class association as well as an ethno-religious one, that is, it was middle class or bourgeois. For this reason American culture might very likely have been *more* intensely Victorian than British culture of the time, since the bourgeoisie was the hegemonic class in American society, and it did not have to struggle with an aristocracy as the English middle class did. In the United States, therefore, Victorian culture, so defined, enjoyed a kind of hegemony greater than it did in Britain (see Howe 1975: esp. 513; Howe 1976).

Central to American Victorian culture as I define it was a value system that combined premodern components like patriarchalism and English common law with attitudes associated with the modernization phase of history: sobriety and

seriousness, conscientiousness, diligence in work, postponement of gratification, sexual repression, and self-improvement. Many of these values can be traced back to the Puritans, but they commanded broader and more enthusiastic support in Victorian times. They offered functional advantages in an urbanizing and industrializing society, especially for people who aspired to upward social mobility in the relatively fluid society of the nineteenth-century United States. These values were celebrated, both explicitly and implicitly, in the didactic messages so common in the communications media of Victorian America.

The politics of Victorian America demonstrated the pervasive influence of Victorian attitudes. During the ‘second party system’ before the Civil War, the Democrats and Whigs each claimed to be the party of thrift and hard work. The Democrats demanded the federal government retire its debt and keep its expenses low, preferred ‘hard money’ (gold and silver coins) to paper in the circulating medium, and opposed legalized bankruptcy. The Whigs supported the Evangelical Movement, including the cause of temperance, and public education. They supported government aid to transportation projects as a wise form of long-term investment. Coincident with the Civil War came the triumph of the new Republican Party, which then dominated American political life for the rest of the Victorian period. Its political philosophy has been well characterized as one of ‘free labour’. According to this ideology, each man should be free to enjoy the fruits of his own hard work and thrift. Since the rule was applied regardless of race, this precluded slavery. It did not, however, mandate a purely laissez-faire version of capitalism, because government pursued measures to encourage commercial and industrial development such as protective tariffs, nationally regulated banks, and free ‘homesteads’ for settlers. The Republicans implemented policies the Whigs had long favoured including subsidies to improve transportation, which now included the transcontinental railroad, and public education, now including higher education. The temperance movement became stronger and more politically active (Foner 1970 is the classic account).

Perhaps the most important of the values American Victorians worked to implement was self-improvement. It was not peculiar to the United States, as the Scot Samuel Smiles demonstrated in both his life and bestselling book *Self-Help*. Abraham Lincoln provides a paradigmatic exemplar of American self-improvement in the Victorian era. Like countless other young Americans of his time, he wished to escape the back-breaking physical labour of agriculture as then practised, and take up some occupation more suited to his talents and interests. Thomas Lincoln, when seeking his son’s help with farm chores, might find the gangly young fellow reading a book under a tree. As soon as the opportunity presented itself, Abraham left his father’s farm and pursued a vocation based on book learning: the law. The economic development and technological innovation of the time multiplied job opportunities. If the goal of careers open to talent were to have broad meaning, the careers themselves had to exist. During the Victorian era countless new occupations appeared (telegraph operators, locomotive engineers, managers and clerks for railroad corporations, loom operators in textile mills, and typists, to specify a few examples), multiplying opportunities for people to move outside the agricultural sector and take up new careers. With the obvious exception of black people, ordinary Americans enjoyed a wider range of vocational oppor-

tunities than most of their British counterparts in Victorian times. But the ideal of self-improvement was by no means only about jobs. In both its British and US incarnations, it was about self-realization, the full development of one's personal potential. Voluntary associations catered to a broad-based version of self-improvement in the Mechanics' Institutes prominent among American as well as British working classes. Without formal schooling available to him, young Lincoln nevertheless missed no opportunity to read books, including John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* (the full text of which only became available in Victorian times), and Euclid's *Geometry* (Howe 1997).

The giant flow of immigration into the United States demonstrated its appeal to ambitious people and helped perpetuate the prevailing preoccupation with self-improvement. The effect of immigration on the 'Victorian' quality of American life was ambiguous. By altering the ethnic composition of the population, immigration may seem to diminish the 'Victorian' ethnicity of America. Yet, as Eric Richards so well points out in his essay here, a substantial portion of nineteenth-century immigrants to the United States came from Britain itself. Immigrants tended to be young adults with above-average skills. In leaving Britain, these people were often consciously escaping from the limitations imposed on them by the English class system, and their letters home sometimes made this explicit. But in rejecting class consciousness to embrace self-improvement, these immigrants were freeing themselves from one aspect of Victorian culture in order to affirm another.

Women and girls participated in the Victorian quest for self-development. Voluntary associations typically had female 'auxiliaries', which provided women the chance to play assertive and leadership roles. Although formal education represented by no means the whole of the self-improvement project, it facilitated the endeavour and signalled one sort of official approval. In colonial America, the Protestant determination to create a literate laity had provided elementary education for girls. Then, in the years before the Civil War, secondary education opened up to them too. The census of 1850 showed the literacy rate of women equal to that of men, making the United States the first country where this was true. Starting in the 1830s, the first colleges began to admit female students. So rapidly did young women take advantage of this opportunity that by 1880, one-third of all American college students were women – a statistic without parallel anywhere else in the world (Solomon 1985: 63). This expansion of education for women tends to confirm the view that in some respects, Victorianism exerted even more power in the United States than in Britain itself.

The undergraduate curriculum in Victorian times varied remarkably little from one American college or university to another. As at English universities, classics was the most prominent subject, and some degree of proficiency in elementary Latin (sometimes Greek as well) was required for admission. As the decades went by across the Victorian period modern foreign languages and modern history made their appearance, but classics long remained the staple of undergraduate instruction. The famous Yale Report of 1828 justified this curriculum on the grounds that it provided mental discipline, universally applicable. When women undergraduates put in their appearance, they too studied the ancient classics, even though such knowledge had long been a male monopoly. Both men and women participated in

the many voluntary self-improvement societies of Victorian America, such as lyceums, chatauquas, library societies, and mutual improvement associations (Winterer 2007; Kelley 2006; Kett 1994).

A typical feature of American colleges in Victorian times was the course on moral philosophy required of seniors. This was often taught by the president of the institution. ‘Moral philosophy’ as then defined included not only ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics, but also what we would call political philosophy, sociology, and economics. The ethical/metaphysical component, at any secular or Protestant institution, would subscribe to the philosophy of Scottish common sense. The rest of moral philosophy constituted the precursor of modern social science, taught in a normative framework, characteristic of American Victorian didacticism. John Stuart Mill’s refutation of Scottish common sense, published in 1865, caught on more slowly in the United States than it did in Great Britain, and as late as the 1890s the president of Princeton University was still defending the old Scottish philosophy (Meyer 1972; Howe 1988; Howe 2010).

At Harvard, however, President Charles William Eliot was breaking away from the prevailing college mould and pioneering the modern research university. By the 1880s, neither classics nor Scottish moral philosophy enjoyed hegemony at Harvard. But Eliot still enthusiastically espoused the Victorian American educational goal of self-realization through the study of canonical texts. He manifested this faith in his famous ‘five-foot shelf’ of books, the 51-volume *Harvard Classics* that he selected. Appearing in 1909, this collection of great writings represented a culminating achievement of intellectual American Victorianism, somewhat as the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1911 did for British Victorianism. Eliot supplemented his collection with a 20-volume *Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction* published in 1917 (Hawkins 1972).

The Concord Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, demonstrated how classical learning could be put to the service of Victorian feminism. Like another great feminist of the Victorian era, John Stuart Mill, she had been a precocious child educated by her father. Growing up before colleges admitted women, she attained fluency in Latin, competence in Greek, and became the most formidably learned New Englander since Cotton Mather. Fuller formulated a theoretical basis for women’s self-realization based on her synthesis of Platonic idealism with Romanticism. Drawing upon her store of learning, she conducted a famous series of consciousness-raising ‘conversations’ aimed at showing women of her generation what goals they should set for themselves and how to go about attaining them. Her definitive two-volume biography is by Charles Capper (Capper 1992; 2007).

Among the attitudes prevalent among the Victorians, both British and American, none attracts more comment today than their assumption of white supremacy, which we rightly find repugnant. Yet although racism was widespread among the Victorians, it does not seem to me an essential or a necessary feature of Victorian culture. (Not all scholars would agree; for example, Coben 1991). I do not find the most outspoken, consistent, and heroic leaders of the antislavery movement any the less Victorian because they condemned racial oppression. William Lloyd Garrison, the president of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and the English abolitionist George Thompson were no less Victorian in their personalities and values

than Jefferson Davis or John C. Calhoun. Serious, didactic, disciplined, austere, prudish, self-righteous – these attributes characterized middle-class American Victorians whether racist or anti-racist, regardless of section, political party, or religious opinion. Black men could be Victorians too, and many self-help and mutual improvement associations existed to encourage them (Cooper 1972). Frederick Douglass, the escaped slave turned antislavery crusader, aspired as Abraham Lincoln did to the roles of the orator, the rhetorician, the model self-made man. Frederick Bailey, fugitive slave, adopted the name Frederick Douglass initially as a disguise to help foil his pursuers, but he did not resume his slave name even after his freedom had been legally purchased, when it would have been safe to do so. His fellow abolitionists soon began to worry that he did not sound to audiences like a former slave. Across three autobiographies Frederick Douglass recorded his resolute struggle to realize his own potential and define himself as a free agent. Douglass's speech on 'Self-Made Men', his most popular one on the lecture circuit, celebrates the achievement of autonomy through moral principle, self-discipline, and hard work; it is an archetypal exemplification of American Victorian culture (Douglass 1893 is the last of many versions of this talk, first delivered 1860, and well analysed in Martin 1984: 256–65).

A check of the library catalogue at the University of California, Los Angeles, for the words 'Victorian' and 'America' turned up over two hundred entries combining the terms. Historians of American women have invoked the term Victorian, often in connection with its sex code (e.g. Smith-Rosenberg 1985; Donnelly 1986). Robert Kelley's comparative study of British, US, and Canadian political ideas did not make use of it, though it would have been appropriate (Kelley 1969). The term has been used to best advantage by American scholars in cultural history, for example by Louise Stevenson and Anne Rose (Stevenson 1991; Rose 1992). The most profitable use of the term so far has probably been that of Leslie Butler, in her superb analysis of the community of American liberal thinkers in the later nineteenth century, *Critical Americans*, showing their relationship to their British counterparts (Butler 2007).

The more US history comes to be examined in a global perspective, the more the usefulness of a 'Victorian period' of American history should become apparent. The term enables us to see the US as a developing country, following the example of Britain in its industrialization. An admitted disadvantage to the concept of 'Victorian America' is that while calling attention to parallels between the United States and Britain, it does so at the cost of parallels between the United States and other countries, notably Germany. Like the United States, Germany had to achieve unification, had to catch up with Britain in the course of industrialization, and waged war to vindicate nationhood in the middle of the Pax Britannica. On the other hand, the interpretive structure of a common Victorian era can be useful in making comparisons among the United States, Canada, and Australia, which share not only English language, law, and culture, but many other characteristics including continental size, political federalism, conflicts with indigenous peoples, and ethnically diverse settler communities.

The conception of a 'Victorian America', exemplified in the iconography of the 'Centennial Mirror', provides an encouraging model for developing countries today. It illustrates how economic progress can promote moral progress. The most obvious

example of this is surely the emancipation of the slaves, forced upon the South by a North that, although also still predominantly agricultural, had envisioned and was pursuing an alternative future in commerce and industry. But perhaps the most relevant lesson for today's developing countries is the way that Victorian America's economic development enhanced the status of women. The multiplication of job opportunities that economic development entails encourages people to move out of the agricultural sector, including women seeking employment beyond the household. The same economic development also encourages public schooling, and when this is extended to include girls as it was in the United States, it lays the foundation for the attainment of gender equality. Outside the agricultural sector, children become less of an economic asset, and as women become more educated, experience clearly demonstrates that the birth rate falls, as it has done in the United States beginning in the Victorian period. This solves the Malthusian problem for developing countries. The prudery of the Victorians, which has become notorious, must surely be related to middle-class concern to limit family size, and this subject is one of many awaiting serious historical investigation.

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